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MONSIEUR MAURICE.

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VOL. I.



# MONSIEUR MAURICE,

A NEW NOVELETTE:

AND OTHER TALES.



BY

AMELIA B. EDWARDS

AUTHOR OF

"BARBARA'S HISTORY," "DEBENHAM'S VOW,"

&c., &c.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

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THE story of "Monsieur Maurice" is new, and appears now for the first time. The shorter tales are reprinted from various serials, and (where the author had not especially reserved the right of re-publication) by kind permission of their several proprietors.

As nothing, perhaps, is more calculated to throw discredit upon a ghost-story than the least pretension to authenticity, it may be as well to add that the said tales were mostly written for Christmas Numbers, and are wholly fictitious.

AMELIA B. EDWARDS.

Westbury-on-Trym.  
August, 1873.



**MONSIEUR MAURICE.**

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MONSIEUR MAURICE.

VOL. I.

B



## MONSIEUR MAURICE.

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### CHAPTER I.

THE events I am about to relate took place more than fifty years ago. I am a white-haired old woman now, and I was then a little girl scarce ten years of age; but those times, and the places and people associated with them, seem, in truth, to lie nearer my memory than the times and people of to-day. Trivial incidents which, if they had happened yesterday, would be forgotten, come back upon me sometimes with all the vivid detail of a photograph; and words unheeded many a year ago start out, like

the handwriting on the wall, in sudden characters of fire.

But this is no new experience. As age creeps on, we all have the same tale to tell. The days of our youth are those we remember best and most fondly, and even the sorrows of that bygone time become pleasures in the retrospect. Of my own solitary childhood I retain the keenest recollection, as the following pages will show.

My father's name was Bernhard—Johann Ludwig Bernhard; and he was a native of Coblentz on the Rhine. Having grown grey in the Prussian service, fought his way slowly and laboriously from the ranks upward, been seven times wounded and twice promoted on the field, he was made colonel of his regiment in 1814, when the Allies entered Paris. In 1819, being no longer fit for active service, he retired on a pension, and was appointed King's steward of the Château of Augustenburg at Brühl—a

sort of military curatorship to which few duties and certain contingent emoluments were attached. Of these last, a suite of rooms in the Château, a couple of acres of private garden, and the revenue accruing from a small local impost, formed the most important part. It was towards the latter half of this year (1819) that, having now for the first time in his life a settled home in which to receive me, my father fetched me from Nuremberg where I was living with my aunt, Martha Baur, and took me to reside with him at Brühl.

Now my aunt, Martha Baur, was an exemplary person in her way; a rigid Lutheran, a strict disciplinarian, and the widow of a wealthy wool-stapler. She lived in a gloomy old house near the Frauen-Kirche, where she received no society, and led a life as varied and lively on the whole as that of a Trappist. Every Wednesday afternoon we paid a visit to the grave of her "blessed man"

in the Protestant cemetery outside the walls, and on Sundays we went three times to church. These were the only breaks in the long' monotony of our daily life. On market-days we never went out of doors at all; and when the great annual fair-time came round, we drew down all the front blinds and inhabited the rooms at the back.

As for the pleasures of childhood, I cannot say that I knew many of them in those old Nuremberg days. Still I was not unhappy, nor even very dull. It may be that, knowing nothing pleasanter, I was not even conscious of the dreariness of the atmosphere I breathed. There was, at all events, a big old-fashioned garden full of vegetables and cottage-flowers, at the back of the house, in which I almost lived in Spring and Summer-time, and from which I managed to extract a great deal of enjoyment; while for companions and playmates I had old Karl, my aunt's gardener, a pigeon-house full of pigeons,

three staid elderly cats, and a tortoise. In the way of education I fared scantily enough, learning just as little as it pleased my aunt to teach me, and having that little presented to me under its driest and most unattractive aspect.

Such was my life till I went away with my father in the Autumn of 1819. I was then between nine and ten years of age—having lost my mother in earliest infancy, and lived with aunt Martha Baur ever since I could remember.

The change from Nuremberg to Brühl was for me like the transition from Purgatory to Paradise. I enjoyed for the first time all the delights of liberty. I had no lessons to learn; no stern aunt to obey; but, which was infinitely pleasanter, a kind-hearted Rhenish Mädchen, with a silver arrow in her hair, to wait upon me; and an indulgent father whose only orders were that I should be allowed to have my own way in everything.

And my way was to revel in the air

and the sunshine; to roam about the park and pleasure-grounds; to watch the soldiers at drill, and hear the band play every day, and wander at will about the deserted state-apartments of the great empty Château.

Looking back upon it from this distance of time, I should pronounce the Electoral Residenz at Brühl to be a miracle of bad taste; but not Aladdin's palace if planted amid the gardens of Armida could then have seemed lovelier in my eyes. The building, a heavy many-windowed pile in the worst style of the worst Renaissance period, stood, and still stands, in a fat, flat country about ten miles from Cologne, to which city it bears much the same relation that Hampton Court bears to London, or Versailles to Paris. Stucco and whitewash had been lavished upon it inside and out, and pallid scagliola did duty everywhere for marble. A grand staircase supported by agonised colossi, grinning and writhing

in vain efforts to look as if they didn't mind the weight, led from the great hall to the state apartments; and in these rooms the bad taste of the building may be said to have culminated. Here were mirrors framed in meaningless arabesques, cornices painted to represent bas-reliefs, consoles and pilasters of mock marble, and long generations of Electors in the tawdriest style of portraiture, all at full length, all in their robes of office, and all too evidently by one and the same hand. To me, however, they were all majestic and beautiful. I believed in themselves, their wigs, their armour, their ermine, their high-heeled shoes and their stereotyped smirk, from the earliest to the latest.

But the gardens and grounds were my chief delight, as indeed they were the main attraction of the place, making it the focus of a holiday resort for the townsfolk of Cologne and Bonn, and a point of interest for travellers. First came a great

gravelled terrace upon which the ground-floor windows opened—a terrace where the sun shone more fiercely than elsewhere, and orange-trees in tubs bore golden fruit, and great green, yellow, and striped pumpkins, alternating with beds of brilliant white and scarlet geraniums, lay lazily sprawling in the sunshine as if they enjoyed it. Beyond this terrace came vast flats of rich green sward laid out in formal walks, flower-beds and fountains; and beyond these again stretched some two or three miles of finely wooded park, pierced by long avenues that radiated from a common centre and framed in exquisite little far-off views of Falkenlust and the blue hills of the Vorgebirge.

We were lodged at the back, where the private gardens and offices abutted on the village. Our own rooms looked upon our own garden, and upon the church and Franciscan convent beyond. In the warm dusk, when all was still, and my father used to sit smoking his meers-

chaum by the open window, we could hear the low pealing of the chapel-organ, and the monks chanting their evening litanies.

A happy time — a pleasant, peaceful place! Ah me! how long ago!

## CHAPTER II.

A WHOLE delightful Summer and Autumn went by thus, and my new home seemed more charming with every change of season. First came the gathering of the golden harvest; then the joyous vintage-time, when the wine-press creaked all day in every open cellar along the village street, and long files of country carts came down from the hills in the dusk evenings, laden with baskets and barrels full of white and purple grapes. And then the long avenues and all the woods of Brühl put on their Autumn robes of crimson, and flame-colour, and golden brown; and the berries reddened in the

hedges; and the Autumn burned itself away like a gorgeous sunset; and November came in grey and cold, like the night-time of the year.

I was so happy, however, that I enjoyed even the dull November. I loved the bare avenues carpeted with dead and rustling leaves—the solitary gardens—the long silent afternoons and evenings when the big logs crackled on the hearth, and my father smoked his pipe in the chimney corner. We had no such wood-fires at Aunt Martha Baur's in those dreary old Nuremberg days, now almost forgotten; but then, to be sure, Aunt Martha Baur, who was a sparing woman and looked after every groschen, had to pay for her own logs, whereas ours were cut from the Crown Woods, and cost not a pfennig.

It was, as well as I can remember, just about this time, when the days were almost at their briefest, that my father received an official communication from

Berlin desiring him to make ready a couple of rooms for the immediate reception of a state-prisoner, for whose safe-keeping he would be held responsible till further notice. The letter—(I have it in my desk now)—was folded square, sealed with five seals, and signed in the King's name by the Minister of War; and it was brought, as I well remember, by a mounted orderly from Cologne.

So a couple of empty rooms were chosen on the second story, just over one of the State apartments at the end of the east wing; and my father, who was by no means well pleased with his office, set to work to ransack the Château for furniture.

“Since it is the King's pleasure to make a gaoler of me,” said he. “I'll try to give my poor devil of a prisoner all the comforts I can. Come with me, my little Gretchen, and let's see what chairs and tables we can find up in the garrets.”

Now I had been longing to explore the

top rooms ever since I came to live at Brühl—those top rooms under the roof, of which the shutters were always closed, and the doors always locked, and where not even the housemaids were admitted oftener than twice a year. So at this welcome invitation I sprang up, joyfully enough, and ran before my father all the way. But when he unlocked the first door, and all beyond was dark, and the air that met us on the threshold had a faint and dead odour, like the atmosphere of a tomb, I shrank back trembling, and dared not venture in. Nor did my courage altogether come back when the shutters were thrown open, and the wintry sunlight streamed in upon dusty floors, and cobwebbed ceilings, and piles of mysterious objects covered in a ghostly way with large white sheets, looking like heaps of slain upon a funeral pyre.

The slain, however, turned out to be the very things of which we were in search; old-fashioned furniture in all

kinds of incongruous styles, and of all epochs—Louis Quatorze cabinets in cracked tortoise-shell and blackened buhl—antique carved chairs emblazoned elaborately with coats of arms, as old as the time of Albert Dürer—slender-legged tables in battered marqueterie—time-pieces in lack-lustre ormolu, still pointing to the hour at which they had stopped, who could tell how many years ago? bundles of moth-eaten tapestries and faded silken hangings—exquisite oval mirrors framed in chipped wreaths of delicate Dresden china—mouldering old portraits of dead-and-gone court beauties in powder and patches, warriors in wigs, and prelates in point-lace—whole suites of furniture in old stamped leather and worm-eaten Utrecht velvet; broken toilette services in pink and blue Sèvres; screens, wardrobes, cornices—in short, all kinds of luxurious lumber going fast to dust, like those who once upon a time enjoyed and owned it.

And now, going from room to room, we chose a chair here, a table there, and so on, till we had enough to furnish a bedroom and sitting-room.

"He must have a writing-table," said my father, thoughtfully, "and a book-case."

Saying which, he stopped in front of a ricketty-looking gilded cabinet with empty red velvet shelves, and tapped it with his cane.

"But supposing he has no books!" suggested I, with the precocious wisdom of nine years of age.

"Then we must beg some, or borrow some, my little Mädchen," replied my father, gravely; "for books are the main solace of the captive, and he who hath them not lies in a twofold prison."

"He shall have my picture-book of Hartz legends!" said I, in a sudden impulse of compassion. Whereupon my father took me up in his arms, kissed me on both cheeks, and bade me choose

some knickknacks for the prisoner's sitting-room.

"For though we have gotten together all the necessaries for comfort, we have taken nothing for adornment," said he, "and 'twere pity the prison were duller than it need be. Choose thou a pretty face or two from among these old pictures, my little Gretchen, and an ornament for his mantelshef. Young as thou art, thou hast the woman's wit in thee."

So I picked out a couple of Sèvres candlesticks; a painted Chinese screen, all pagodas and parrots; two portraits of patched and powdered beauties in the Watteau style; and a queer old clock surmounted by a gilt Cupid in a chariot drawn by doves. If these failed to make him happy, thought I, he must indeed be hard to please.

That afternoon, the things having been well dusted, and the rooms thoroughly cleaned, we set to work to arrange the furniture, and so quickly was this done

that before we sat down to supper the place was ready for occupation, even to the logs upon the hearth and the oil-lamp upon the table.

All night my dreams were of the prisoner. I was seeking him in the gloom of the upper rooms, or amid the dusky mazes of the leafless plantations—always seeing him afar off, never overtaking him, and trying in vain to catch a glimpse of his features. But his face was always turned from me.

My first words on waking, were to ask if he had yet come. All day long I was waiting, and watching, and listening for him, starting up at every sound, and continually running to the window. Would he be young and handsome? Or would he be old, and white-haired, and world-forgotten, like some of those Bastille prisoners I had heard my father speak of? Would his chains rattle when he walked about? I asked myself these questions, and answered them as my

childish imagination prompted, a hundred times a day ; and still he came not.

So another twenty-four hours went by, and my impatience was almost beginning to wear itself out, when at last, about five o'clock in the afternoon of the third day, it being already quite dark, there came a sudden clanging of the gates, followed by a rattle of wheels in the courtyard, and a hurrying to and fro of feet upon the stairs.

Then, listening with a beating heart, but seeing nothing, I knew that he was come.

I had to sleep that night with my curiosity ungratified ; for my father had hurried away at the first sounds from without, nor came back till long after I had been carried off to bed by my Rhenish handmaiden.

## CHAPTER III.

HE was neither old nor white-haired. He was, as well as I, in my childish way could judge, about thirty-five years of age, pale, slight, dark-eyed, delicate-looking. His chains did not rattle as he walked, for the simple reason that, being a prisoner on parole, he suffered no kind of restraint, but was as free as myself of the Château and grounds. He wore his hair long, tied behind with a narrow black ribbon, and very slightly powdered; and he dressed always in deep mourning—black, all black, from head to foot, even to his shoe-buckles. He was a Frenchman, and he went by the name of Monsieur Maurice.

I cannot tell how I knew that this was only his Christian name; but so it was, and I knew him by no other, neither did my father. I have, indeed, evidence among our private papers to show that neither by those in authority at Berlin, nor by the prisoner himself, was he at any time informed either of the family name of Monsieur Maurice, or of the nature of the offence, whether military or political, for which that gentleman was consigned to his keeping at Brühl.

"Of one thing at least I am certain," said my father, holding out his pipe for me to fill it. "He is a soldier."

It was just after dinner, the second day following our prisoner's arrival, and I was sitting on my father's knee before the fire, as was our pleasant custom of an afternoon.

"I see it in his eye," my father went on to say. "I see it in his walk.

I see it in the way he arranges his papers on the table. Everything in order. Everything put away into the smallest possible compass. All this bespeaketh the camp."

"I don't believe he is a soldier, for all that," said I, thoughtfully. "He is too gentle."

"The bravest soldiers, my little Gretchen, are oft-times the gentlest," replied my father. "The great French hero, Bayard, and the great English hero, Sir Philip Sidney, about whom thou wert reading 'tother day, were both as tender and gentle as women."

"But he neither smokes, nor swears, nor talks loud," said I, persisting in my opinion.

My father smiled, and pinched my ear.

"Nay, little one," said he, "Monsieur Maurice is not like thy father—a rough German Dragoon risen from the ranks. He is a gentleman, and a Frenchman;

and he hath all the polish of what the Frenchman calls the *vieille école*. And there again he puzzles me with his court-manners and his powdered hair! He's no Bonapartist, I'll be sworn—yet if he be o' the King's side, what doth he here, with the usurper at Saint Helena, and Louis the Eighteenth come to his own again?"

"But he *is* a Bonapartist, father," said I, "for he carries the Emperor's portrait on his snuff-box."

My father laid down his pipe, and drew a long breath expressive of astonishment.

"He showed thee his snuff-box!" exclaimed he.

"Ay—and told me it was the Emperor's own gift."

"Thunder and Mars! And when was this, my little Gretchen?"

"Yesterday morning, on the terrace. And he asked my name; and told me I should go up some day to his room

and see his sketches; and he kissed me when he said good-bye; and—and I like Monsieur Maurice very much, father, and I'm sure it's very wicked of the King to keep him here in prison!"

My father looked at me, shook his head, and twirled his long grey moustache.

"Bonapartist or Legitimist, again I say what doth he here?" muttered he presently, more to himself than to me. "If Legitimist, why not with his King? If Bonapartist—then he is his King's prisoner; not ours. It passeth my comprehension how we should hold him at Brühl."

"Let him run away, father dear, and don't run after him!" whispered I, putting my arms coaxingly about his neck.

"But 'tis some cursed mess of politics at bottom, depend on't!" continued my father, still talking to himself. "Ah, you don't know what politics

are, my little Gretchen!—so much the better for you!”

“I do know what politics are,” replied I, with great dignity. “They are the *chef-d’œuvre* of Satan. I heard you say so the other day.”

My father burst into a Titanic roar of laughter.

“Said I so?” shouted he. “Thunder and Mars! I did not remember that I had ever said anything half so epigrammatic!”

Now from this it will be seen that the prisoner and I were already acquainted. We had, indeed, taken to each other from the first, and our mutual liking ripened so rapidly that before a week was gone by we had become the fastest friends in the world.

Our first meeting, as I have already said, took place upon the terrace. Our second, which befell on the afternoon of the same day when my father and I had held the conversation just re-

corded, happened on the stairs. Monsieur Maurice was coming up with his hat on; I was running down. He stopped, and held out both his hands.

“*Bonjour, petite,*” he said, smiling.  
“Whither away so fast?”

The hoar frost was clinging to his coat, where he had brushed against the trees in his walk, and he looked pale and tired.

“I am going home,” I replied.

“Home? Did you not tell me you lived in the Château?”

“So I do, Monsieur; but at the other side, up the other staircase. This is the side of the state-apartments.”

Then, seeing in his face a look half of surprise, half of curiosity, I added:—

“I often go there in the afternoon, when it is too cold, or too late for out-of doors. They are such beautiful rooms, and full of such beautiful pictures! Would you like to see them?”

He smiled, and shook his head.

"Thanks, petite," he said, "I am too cold now, and too tired; but you shall show them to me some other day. Meanwhile, suppose you come up and pay me that promised visit?"

I assented joyfully, and slipping my hand into his with the ready confidence of childhood, turned back at once and went with him to his rooms on the second floor.

Here, finding the fire in the salon nearly out, we went down upon our knees and blew the embers with our breath, and laughed so merrily over our work that by the time the new logs had caught, I was as much at home as if I had known Monsieur Maurice all my life.

"*Tiens !*" he said, taking me presently upon his knee and brushing the specks of white ash from my clothes and hair, "what a little Cinderella I have made of my guest! This must not happen again, Gretchen. Did you not tell me yesterday that your name was Gretchen?"

"Yes, but Gretchen, you know, is not my real name," said I, "my real name is Marguerite. Gretchen is only my pet name."

"Then you will always be Gretchen for me," said Monsieur Maurice, with the sweetest smile in the world.

There were books upon the table; there was a thing like a telescope on a brass stand in the window; there was a guitar lying on the couch. The fire, too, was burning brightly now, and the room altogether wore a cheerful air of habitation.

"It looks more like a lady's boudoir than a prison," said Monsieur Maurice, reading my thoughts. "I wonder whose rooms they were before I came here!"

"They were nobody's rooms," said I. "They were quite empty."

And then I told him where we had found the furniture, and how the ornamental part thereof had been of my choosing.

"I don't know who the ladies are," I said, referring to the portraits. "I only chose them for their pretty faces."

"Their lovers probably did the same, *petite*, a hundred years ago," replied Monsieur Maurice. "And the clock—did you choose that also?"

"Yes; but the clock doesn't go."

"So much the better. I would that time might stand still also—till I am free! till I am free!"

The tears rushed to my eyes. It was the tone more than the words that touched my heart. He stooped and kissed me on the forehead.

"Come to the window, little one," said he, "and I will show you something very beautiful. Do you know what this is?"

"A telescope!"

"No; a solar microscope. Now look down into this tube, and tell me what you see. A piece of Persian carpet? No—a butterfly's wing magnified hundreds

and hundreds of time. And this which looks like an aigrette of jewels? Will you believe that it is just the tiny plume which waves on the head of every little gnat that buzzes round you on a Summer's evening?"

I uttered exclamation after exclamation of delight. Every fresh object seemed more wonderful and beautiful than the last, and I felt as if I could go on looking down that magic tube for ever. Meanwhile Monsieur Maurice, whose good-nature was at least as inexhaustible as my curiosity, went on changing the slides till we had gone through a whole boxfull.

By this time it was getting rapidly dusk, and I could see no longer.

"You will show me some more another day?" said I, giving up reluctantly.

"That I will, *petite*, I have at least a dozen more boxes full of slides."

"And—and you said I should see your sketches, Monsieur Maurice."

"All in good time, little Gretchen," he said, smiling. "All in good time. See—those are the sketches, in yonder folio; that mahogany case under the couch contains a collection of gems in glass and paste; those red books in the bookcase are full of pictures. You shall see them all by degrees; but only by degrees. For if I did not keep something back to tempt my little guest, she would not care to visit the solitary prisoner."

I felt myself colour crimson.

"But—but indeed I would care to come, Monsieur Maurice, if you had nothing at all to show me," I said, half hurt, half angry.

He gave me a strange look that I could not understand, and stroked my hair caressingly.

"Come often, then, little one," he said. "Come very often; and when we are tired of pictures and microscopes, we will sit upon the floor, and tell sad stories of the deaths of kings."

Then, seeing me look puzzled, he laughed and added :—

“’Tis a great English poet says that, Gretchen, in one of his plays.”

Here a shrill trumpet-call in the courtyard, followed by the prolonged roll of many drums, warned me that evening parade was called, and that as soon as it was over my father would be home and looking for me. So I started up, and put out my hand to say good-bye.

Monsieur Maurice took it between both his own.

“I don’t like parting from you so soon, little Mädchen,” he said. “Will you come again to-morrow?”

“Every day, if you like!” I replied eagerly.

“Then every day it shall be; and—let me see—you shall improve my bad German, and I will teach you French.”

I could have clapped my hands for joy. I was longing to learn French, and I

knew how much it would also please my father; so I thanked Monsieur Maurice again and again, and ran home with a light heart to tell of all the wonders I had seen.

## CHAPTER IV.

FROM this time forth, I saw him always once, and sometimes twice a day—in the afternoons, when he regularly gave me the promised French lesson; and occasionally in the mornings, provided the weather was neither too cold nor too damp for him to join me in the grounds. For Monsieur Maurice was not strong. He could not with impunity face snow, and rain, and our keen Rhenish north-east winds; and it was only when the wintry sun shone out at noon and the air came tempered from the south, that he dared venture from his own fire-side. When,

however, there shone a sunny day, with what delight I used to summon him for a walk, take him to my favourite points of view, and show him the woodland nooks that had been my chosen haunts in summer! Then, too, the unwonted colour would come back to his pale cheek, and the smile to his lips, and while the ramble and the sunshine lasted he would be all jest and gaiety, pelting me with dead leaves, chasing me in and out of the plantations, and telling me strange stories, half pathetic, half grotesque, of Dryads, and Fauns, and Satyrs — of Bacchus, and Pan, and Polyphemus—of nymphs who became trees, and shepherds who were transformed to fountains, and all kinds of beautiful wild myths of antique Greece—far more beautiful and far more wild than all the tales of gnomes and witches in my book of Hartz legends.

At other times, when the weather was cold or rainy, he would take down

his "Musée Napoléon," a noble work in eight or ten volumes, and show me engravings after pictures by great masters in the Louvre, explaining them to me as we went along, painting in words the glow and glory of the absent colour, and steeping my childish imagination in golden dreams of Raphael and Titian, and Paulo Veronese.

And sometimes, too, as the dusk came on and the firelight brightened in the gathering gloom, he would take up his guitar, and to the accompaniment of a few slight chords sing me a quaint old French chanson of the feudal times; or an Arab chant picked up in the tent or the Nile boat; or a Spanish ballad, half love-song, half litany, learned from the lips of a muleteer on the Pyrenean border.

For Monsieur Maurice, whatever his present adversities, had travelled far and wide at some foregone period of his life—in Syria, and Persia; in north-

ernmost Tartary and the Siberian steppes ; in Egypt and the Nubian desert, and among the perilous wilds of central Arabia. He spoke and wrote with facility some ten or twelve languages. He drew admirably, and had a profound knowledge of the Italian schools of art ; and his memory was a rich storehouse of adventure and anecdote, legend and song.

I am an old woman now, and Monsieur Maurice must have passed away many a year ago upon his last long journey ; but even at this distance of time, my eyes are dimmed with tears when I remember how he used to unlock that storehouse for my pleasure, and ransack his memory for stories either of his own personal perils by flood and field, or of the hairbreadth 'scapes of earlier travellers. For it was his amusement to amuse me ; his happiness to make me happy. And I in return loved him with all my childish heart. Nay, with some-

thing deeper and more romantic than a childish love—say rather with that kind of passionate hero-worship which is an attribute more of youth than of childhood, and, like the quality of mercy, blesseth him that gives even more than him that takes.

“What dreadful places you have travelled in, Monsieur Maurice!” I exclaimed one day. “What dangers you have seen!”

He had been showing me a little sketchbook full of Eastern jottings, and had just explained how a certain boat therein depicted had upset with him on a part of the Upper Nile so swarming with alligators that he had to swim for his life, and even so, barely scrambled up the slimy bank in time.

“He who travels far courts many kinds of death,” replied Monsieur Maurice; “but he escapes that which is worst—death from ennui.”

“Suppose they had dragged you back,

when you were half way up the bank !” said I, shuddering.

And as I spoke, I felt myself turn pale ; for I could see the brown monsters crowding to shore, and the red glitter of their cruel eyes, and the hot breath steaming from their open jaws.

“ Then they would have eaten me up as easily as you might swallow an oyster,” laughed Monsieur Maurice. “ Nay, my child, why that serious face ? I should have escaped a world of trouble, and been missed by no one—except poor Ali.”

“ Who was Ali ?” I asked quickly.

“ Ali was my Nubian servant—my only friend, then ; as you, little Gretchen, are my only friend, now,” replied Monsieur Maurice, sadly. “ Aye, my only little friend in the wide world—and I think a true one.”

I did not know what to say ; but I nestled closer to his side ; and pressed my cheek up fondly against his shoulder.

“ Tell me more about him, Monsieur

Maurice," I whispered. "I am so glad he loved you dearly."

"He loved me very dearly," said Monsieur Maurice, "so dearly that he gave his life for me."

"But is Ali dead?"

"Ay—Ali is dead. Nay, his story is brief enough, *petite*. I bought him in the slave market at Cairo—a poor, sickly, soulless lad, half stupid from ill-treatment. I gave him good food, good clothes, and liberty. I taught him to read. I made him my own servant; and his soul and his strength came back to him as if by a miracle. He became stalwart and intelligent, and so faithful that he was ten times more my salve than if I had held him to his bondage. I took him with me through all my Eastern pilgrimage. He was my body-guard; my cook; my dragoon; everything. He slept on a mat at the foot of my bed every night, like a dog. So he lived with me for nearly four years—till I lost him."

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He paused.

I did not dare to ask, "what more?" but waited breathlessly.

"The rest is soon told," he said presently; but in an altered voice. "It happened in Ceylon. Our way lay along a bridle-path overhanging a steep gorge on the one hand and skirting the jungle on the other. Do you know what the jungle is, little Gretchen? Fancy an untrodden wilderness where huge trees, matted together by trailing creepers of gigantic size, shut out the sun and make a green roof of inextricable shade—where the very grass grows taller than the tallest man—where apes chatter, and parrots scream, and deadly reptiles swarm; and where nature has run wild since ever the world began. Well, so we went—I on my horse; Ali at my bridle; two porters following with food and baggage; the precipice below; the forest above; the morning sun just risen over all. On a sudden, Ali held his breath and listened.

His practised ear had caught a sound that mine could not detect. He seized my rein—forced my horse back upon his haunches—drew his hunting knife, and ran forward to reconnoitre. The turn of the road hid him for a moment from my sight. The next instant, I had sprung from the saddle, pistol in hand, and run after him to share the sport or the danger. My little Gretchen—he was gone.”

“Gone!” I echoed.

Monsieur Maurice shook his head, and turned his face away.

“I heard a crashing and crackling of the underwood,” he said; “a faint moan dying on the sultry air. I saw a space of dusty road trampled over with prints of an enormous paw—a tiny trail of blood—a shred of silken fringe—and nothing more.” He was gone.”

“What was it?” I asked presently, in an awe-struck whisper.

Monsieur Maurice, instead of answering my question, opened the sketch-book at

a page full of little outlines of animals and birds, and laid his finger silently on the figure of a sleeping tiger.

I shuddered.

“*Pauvre petite !*” he said, shutting up the book, “it is too terrible a story. I ought not to have told it to you. Try to forget it.”

“Ah, no !” I said. “I shall never forget it, Monsieur Maurice. Poor Ali ! Have you still the piece of fringe you found lying in the road ?”

He unlocked his desk and touched a secret spring ; whereupon a small drawer flew out from a recess just under the lock.

“Here it is,” he said, taking out a piece of folded paper.

It contained the thing he had described— a scrap of fringe composed of crimson and yellow twist, about two inches in length.

“And those other things ?” I said, peering into the secret drawer with a child’s inquisitiveness. “Have they a history, too ?”

MONSIEUR MAURICE.

Monsieur Maurice hesitated—took them out—sighed—and said, somewhat reluctantly:—

“You may see them, little Gretchen, if you will. Yes; they, too, have their history—but let it be. We have had enough sad stories for to-day.”

Those other things, as I had called them, were a withered rose in a little cardboard box, and a miniature of a lady in a purple morocco case.

## CHAPTER V.

IT so happened that the Winter this year was unusually severe, not only at Brühl and the parts about Cologne, but throughout all the Rhine country. Heavy snows fell at Christmas and lay unmelted for weeks upon the ground. Long forgotten sleighs were dragged out from their hiding places and put upon the road, not only for the transport of goods, but for the conveyance of passengers. The ponds in every direction and all the smaller streams were fast frozen. Great masses of dirty ice, too, came floating down the Rhine, and there were rumours of the great river being quite frozen over somewhere up in

Switzerland, many hundred miles nearer its source.

For myself, I enjoyed it all—the bitter cold, the short days, the rapid exercise, the blazing fires within, and the glittering snow without. I made snow-men and and snow-castles to my heart's content. I learned to skate with my father on the frozen ponds. I was never weary of admiring the wintry landscape—the wide plains sheeted with silver; the purple mountains peeping through brown vistas of bare forest; the nearer trees standing out in featherlike tracery against the blue-green sky. To me it was all beautiful; even more beautiful than in the radiant summer-time.

Not so, however, was it with Monsieur Maurice. Racked by a severe cough and unable to leave the house for weeks together, he suffered intensely all the winter through. He suffered in body, and he suffered also in mind. I could see that he was very sad, and that there were times when the burden of life was

bountiful sun? No, no, my child! Where I come from, we have the only true sun, and believe in no other!"

"But you come from France, don't you, Monsieur Maurice?" I asked quickly.

"From the South of France, petite—from the France of palms, and orange-groves, and olives; where the myrtle flowers at Christmas, and the roses bloom all the year round!"

"But that must be where Paradise was, Monsieur Maurice!" I exclaimed.

"Ay; it was Paradise once—for me," he said, with a sigh.

Thus, after a moment's pause, he went on:—

"The house in which I was born stands on a low cliff above the sea. It is an old, old house, with all kinds of quaint little turrets, and gable ends, and picturesque nooks and corners about it—such as one sees in most French Châteaux of that period; and it lies back somewhat, with a great rambling garden stretching

out between it and the edge of the cliff. Three *berceaux* of orange-trees lead straight away from the paved terrace on which the salon windows open, to another terrace overhanging the beach and the sea. The cliff is overgrown from top to bottom with shrubs and wild flowers, and a flight of steps cut in the living rock leads down to a little cove and a strip of yellow sand a hundred feet below. Ah, petite, I fancy I can see myself scrambling up and down those steps—a child younger than yourself; watching the sun go down into that purple sea; counting the sails in the offing at early morn; and building castles with that yellow sand, just as you build castles out yonder with the snow!”

I clasped my hands and listened breathlessly.

“Oh, Monsieur Maurice,” I said, “I did not think there was such a beautiful place in the world! It sounds like a fairy tale.”

He smiled, sighed, and—being seated at his desk with the pen in his hand—took up a blank sheet of paper, and began sketching the Château and the cliff.

“Tell me more about it, Monsieur Maurice,” I pleaded coaxingly.

“What more can I tell you, little one? See—this window in the turret to the left was my bed-room window, and here, just below, was my study, where as a boy I prepared my lessons for my tutor. That large gothic window under the gable was the window of the library.”

“And is it all just like that still?” I asked.

“I don’t know,” he said dreamily. “I suppose so.”

He was now putting in the rocks, and the rough steps leading down to the beach.

“Had you any little brothers and sisters, Monsieur Maurice?” I asked next; for my interest and curiosity were unbounded.

He shook his head.

"None," he said, "none whatever. I was an only child; and I am the last of my name."

I longed to question him further, but did not dare to do so.

"You will go back there some day, Monsieur Maurice," I said hesitatingly, "when—when—"

"When I am free, little Gretchen? Ah! who can tell? Besides the old place is no longer mine. They have taken it from me, and given it to a stranger."

"Taken it from you, Monsieur Maurice!" I exclaimed indignantly.

"Ay; but—who knows? We see strange changes. Where a king reigns to-day, an emperor, or a mob, may rule to-morrow."

He spoke more to himself than to me, but I had some dim understanding, nevertheless, of what he meant.

He had by this time drawn the cliff, and the strip of sand, and the waste of sea beyond; and now he was blotting

in some boats and figures—figures of men wading through the surf and dragging the boats in shore; and other figures making for the steps. Last of all, close under the cliff, in advance of all the rest, he drew a tiny man standing alone—a tiny man scarce an eighth of an inch in height, struck out with three or four touches of the pen, and yet so full of character that one knew at a glance he was the leader of the others. I saw the outstretched arm in act of command—I recognised the well-known cocked hat—the general outline of a figure already familiar to me in a hundred prints, and I exclaimed, almost involuntarily:—

“Bonaparte!”

Monsieur Maurice started; shot a quick, half apprehensive glance at me; crumpled the drawing up in his hand, and flung it into the fire.

“Oh, Monsieur Maurice!” I cried, “what have you done?”

“It was a mere scrawl,” he said impatiently.

"No, no—it was beautiful. I would have given anything for it!"

Monsieur Maurice laughed, and patted me on the cheek.

"Nonsense, petite, nonsense!" he said. "It was only fit for the fire. I will make you a better drawing, if you remind me of it, to-morrow."

When I told this to my father—and I used to prattle to him a good deal about Monsieur Maurice at supper, in those days—he tugged at his moustache, and shook his head, and looked very grave indeed.

"The South of France!" he muttered, "the South of France! *Sacré cœur d'une bombe!* Why, the usurper, when he came from Elba, landed on that coast somewhere near Cannes!"

"And went to Monsieur Maurice's house, father!" I cried, "and that is why the King of France has taken Monsieur Maurice's house away from him, and given it to a stranger! I am sure that's it! I see it all now!"

But my father only shook his head again, and looked still more grave.

“No, no, no,” he said, “neither all—nor half—nor a quarter! There’s more behind. I don’t understand it—I don’t understand it. Thunder and Mars! Why don’t we hand him over to the French Government? That’s what puzzles me.”

## CHAPTER VI.

THE severity of the Winter had, I think, in some degree abated, and the snowdrops were already above ground, when again a mounted orderly rode in from Cologne, bringing another official letter for the Governor of Brühl.

Now my father's duties as Governor of Brühl were very light—so light that he had not found it necessary to set apart any special room, or bureau, for the transaction of such business as might be connected therewith. When, therefore, letters had to be written or accounts made up, he wrote those letters and made up those accounts at a certain large

writing-table, fitted with drawers, pigeon-holes, and a shelf for account-books, that stood in a corner of our sitting-room. Here also, if any persons had to be received, he received them. To this day, whenever I go back in imagination to those bygone times, I seem to see my father sitting at that writing-table nibbling the end of his pen, and one of the sergeants off guard perched on the edge of a chair close against the door, with his hat on his knees, waiting for orders.

There being, as I have said, no especial room set apart for business purposes, the orderly was shown straight to our own room, and there delivered his despatch. It was about a quarter past one. We had dined, and my father had just brought out his pipe. The door leading into our little dining-room was, indeed, standing wide open, and the dishes were still upon the table

My father took the despatch, turned it over, broke the seals one by one (there

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were five of them, as before), and read it slowly through. As he read, a dark cloud seemed to settle on his brow.

Then he looked up, frowning—seemed about to speak—checked himself—and read the despatch over again.

“From whose hands did you receive this?” he said abruptly.

“From General Berndorf, Excellency,” stammered the orderly, carrying his hand to his cap.

“Is his Excellency the Baron von Bulow at Cologne?”

“I have not heard so, Excellency.”

“Then this despatch came direct from Berlin, and has been forwarded from Cologne?”

“Yes, Excellency.”

“How did it come from Berlin? By mail, or by special messenger?”

“By special messenger, Excellency.”

Now General Berndorf was the officer in command of the garrison at Cologne, and the Baron von Bulow, as I well

knew, was His Majesty's Minister of War at Berlin.

Having received these answers, my father stood silent, as if revolving some difficult matter in his thoughts. Then, his mind being made up, he turned again to the orderly and said:—

“Dine—feed your horse—and come back in an hour for the answer.”

Thankful to be dismissed, the man saluted and vanished. My father had a rapid, stern way of speaking to subordinates, that had in general the effect of making them glad to get out of his presence as quickly as possible.

Then he read the despatch for the third time; turned to his writing-table; dropped into his chair; and prepared to write.

But the task, apparently, was not easy. Watching him from the fireside corner where I was sitting on a low stool with an open story-book upon my lap, I saw him begin and tear up three separate attempts. The fourth,

however, seemed to be more successful. Once written, he read it over, copied it carefully, called to me for a light, sealed his letter, and addressed it to "His Excellency the Baron von Bulow."

This done, he enclosed it under cover to "General Berndorf, Cologne;" and had just sealed the outer cover when the orderly came back. My father gave it to him with scarcely a word, and two minutes after, we heard him clattering out of the courtyard at a hand-gallop.

Then my father came back to his chair by the fireside, lit his pipe, and sat thinking silently. I looked up in his face, but felt, somehow, that I must not speak to him; for the cloud was still there, and his thoughts were far away. Presently his pipe went out; but he held it still, unconscious and absorbed. In all the months we had been living at Brühl I had never seen seen him look so troubled.

So he sat, and so he looked for a long time—for perhaps the greater part of an hour—during which I could think of nothing but the despatch, and Monsieur Maurice, and the Minister of War ; for that it all had to do with Monsieur Maurice I never doubted for an instant.

By just such another despatch, sealed and sent in precisely the same way, and from the same person, his coming hither had been heralded. How, then, should not this one concern him ? And in what way would he be affected by it ? Seeing that dark look in my father's face, I knew not what to think or what to fear.

At length, after what had seemed to me an interval of interminable silence, the time-piece in the corner struck half-past three—the hour at which Monsieur Maurice was accustomed to give me the daily French lesson ; so I got up quietly and stole towards the

door, knowing that I was expected upstairs.

"Where are you going, Gretchen?" said my father, sharply.

It was the first time he had opened his lips since the orderly had clattered out of the courtyard.

"I am going up to Monsieur Maurice," I replied.

My father shook his head.

"Not to-day, my child," he said, "not to-day. I have business with Monsieur Maurice this afternoon. Stay here till I come back."

And with this he got up, took his hat and went quickly out of the room.

So I waited and waited—as it seemed to me for hours. The waning daylight faded and became dusk; the dusk thickened into dark; the fire burned red and dull; and still I crouched there in the chimney-corner. I had no heart to read, work, or fan the logs into a blaze. I just watched the clock, and

waited. When the room became so dark that I could see the hands no longer, I counted the strokes of the pendulum, and told the quarters off upon my fingers.

When at length my father came back, it was past five o'clock, and dark as midnight.

"Quick, quick, little Gretchen," he said, pulling off his hat and gloves, and unbuckling his sword. "A glass of kirsch, and more logs on the fire! I am cold through and through, and wet into the bargain."

"But—but, father, have you not been with Monsieur Maurice?" I said, anxiously.

"Yes, of course; but that was an hour ago, and more. I have been over to Kierberg since then, in the rain."

He had left Monsieur Maurice an hour ago — a whole, wretched, dismal hour, during which I might have been so happy!

"You told me to stay here till you came

back," I said, scarce able to keep down the tears that started to my eyes.

" Well, my little Mädchen ?"

" And—and I might have gone up to Monsieur Maurice, after all ?"

My father looked at me gravely—poured out a second glass of kirsch—drew his chair to the front of the fire, and said :—

" I don't know about that, Gretchen."

I had felt all along that there was something wrong, and now I was certain of it.

" What do you mean, father ?" I said, my heart beating so that I could scarcely speak. " What is the matter ?"

" May the devil make broth of my bones, if I know !" said my father, tugging savagely at his moustache.

" But there is something !"

He nodded, grimly.

" Monsieur Maurice, it seems, is not to have so much liberty," he said, after a moment. " He is not to walk in the grounds oftener than twice a week ; and

then only with a soldier at his heels. And he is not to go beyond half a mile from the Château in any direction. And he is to hold no communication whatever with any person, or persons, either in-doors or out-of-doors, except such as are in direct charge of his rooms or his person. And—and heaven knows what other confounded regulations besides! I wish the Baron von Bulow had been in Spitzbergen before he put it into the King's head to send him here at all!"

"But—but he is not to be locked up?" I faltered, almost in a whisper.

"Well, no—not exactly that; but I am to post a sentry in the corridor, outside his door."

"Then the King is afraid that Monsieur Maurice will run away!"

"I don't know—I suppose so," groaned my father.

I sat silent for a moment, and then burst into a flood of tears.

"Poor Monsieur Maurice!" I cried.

"He has coughed so all the Winter, and he was longing for the Spring! We were to have gathered primroses in the woods when the warm days came back again—and—and—and I suppose the King doesn't mean that I am not to speak to him any more!"

My sobs choked me, and I could say no more.

My father took me on his knee, and tried to comfort me.

"Don't cry, my little Gretchen," he said tenderly; "don't cry! Tears can help neither the prisoner nor thee."

"But I may go to him all the same, father?" I pleaded.

"By my sword, I don't know," stammered my father. "If it were a breach of orders . . . . and yet for a baby like thee . . . . thou'rt no more than a mouse about the room, after all!"

"I have read of a poor prisoner who broke his heart because the gaoler killed a spider he loved," said I, through my tears.

My father's features relaxed into a smile.

"But do you flatter yourself that Monsieur Maurice loves my little Mädchen as much as that poor prisoner loved his spider?" he said, taking me by the ear.

"Of course he does—and a hundred thousand times better!" I exclaimed, not without a touch of indignation.

My father laughed outright.

"Thunder and Mars!" said he, "is the case so serious? Then Monsieur Maurice, I suppose, must be allowed sometimes to see his little pet spider."

He took me up himself next morning to the prisoner's room, and then for the first time I found a sentry in occupation of the corridor. He grounded his musket and saluted as we passed.

"I bring you a visitor, Monsieur Maurice," said my father.

He was leaning over the fire in a moody attitude when we went in, with his arms on the chimney-piece, but turned at the first sound of my father's voice.

"Colonel Bernhard," he said, with a look of glad surprise, "this is kind, I—I had scarcely dared to hope" . . .

He said no more, but took me by both hands, and kissed me on the forehead.

"I trust I'm not doing wrong," said my father gruffly. "I hope it's not a breach of orders."

"I am sure it is not," replied Monsieur Maurice, still holding my hands. "Were your instructions twice as strict, they could not be supposed to apply to this little maiden."

"They are strict enough, Monsieur Maurice," said my father, drily.

A faint flush rose to the prisoner's cheek.

"I know it," he said. "And they are as unnecessary as they are strict. I had given you my parole, Colonel Bernhard."

My father pulled at his moustache, and looked uncomfortable.

"I'm sure you would have kept it, Monsieur Maurice," he said.

Monsieur Maurice bowed.

"I wish it, however, to be distinctly understood," he said, "that I withdrew that parole from the moment when a sentry was stationed at my door."

"Naturally—naturally."

"And, for my papers" . . . .

"I wish to heaven they had said nothing about them!" interrupted my father, impatiently.

"Thanks. Tis a petty tyranny; but it cannot be helped. Since, however, you are instructed to seize them, here they are. They contain neither political nor private matter—as you will see."

"I shall see nothing of the kind, Monsieur Maurice," said my father. "I would not read a line of them for a marshal's bâton. The King must make a gaoler of me, if it so pleases him; but not a spy. I shall seal up the papers and send them to Berlin."

“And I shall never see my manuscript again!” said Monsieur Maurice, with a sigh. “Well—it was my first attempt at authorship—perhaps, my last—and there is an end to it!”

My father ground some new and tremendous oath between his teeth.

“I hate to take it, Monsieur Maurice,” he said. “’Tis an odious office.”

“The office alone is yours, Colonel Bernhard,” said the prisoner, with all a Frenchman’s grace. “The odium rests with those who impose it on you.”

Hereupon they exchanged formal salutations; and my father, having warned me not to be late for our mid-day meal, put the papers in his pocket, and left me to take my daily French lesson.

## CHAPTER VII.

THE Winter lingered long, but the Spring came at last in a burst of sunshine. The grey mists were rent away, as if by magic. The cold hues vanished from the landscape. The earth became all freshness; the air all warmth; the sky all light. The hedgerows caught a tint of tender green. The crocuses came up in a single night. The woods which till now had remained bare and brown, flushed suddenly, as if the coming Summer were imprisoned in their glowing buds. The birds began to try their little voices here and there. Never once, in all the years that have gone by since then, have I seen so startling a transition. It was

as if the Prince in the dear old fairy tale had just kissed the Sleeping Beauty, and all that enchanted world had sprung into life at the meeting of their lips.

But the Spring, with its sudden beauty and brightness, seems to have no charm for Monsieur Maurice. He has permission to walk in the grounds twice a week—with a sentry at his heels; but of that permission he sternly refuses to take advantage. It was not wonderful that he preferred his fireside and his books, while the sleet, and snow, and bitter east winds lasted; but it seems too cruel that he should stay there now, cutting himself off from all the warmth and sweetness of the opening season. In vain I come to him with my hands full of dewy crocuses. In vain I hang about him, pleading for just a turn or two on the terrace where the sunshine falls hottest. He shakes his head, and is immovable.

“No, petite,” he says. “Not to-day.”

“That is just what you said yesterday, Monsieur Maurice.”

“And it is just what I shall say tomorrow, Gretchen, if you ask me again.”

“But you won’t stay in for ever, Monsieur Maurice!”

“Nay—‘for ever’ is a big word, little Gretchen.”

“I don’t believe you know how brightly the sun is shining!” I say coaxingly. “Just come to the window, and see.”

Unwillingly enough, he lets himself be dragged across the room—unwillingly he looks out upon the glittering slopes and budding avenues beyond.

“Yes, yes—I see it,” he replies with an impatient sigh; “but the shadow of that fellow in the corridor would hide the brightest sun that ever shone! I am not a galley-slave, that I should walk about with a garde-chiourme behind me.”

“What do you mean, Monsieur Maurice?” I ask, startled by his unusual vehemence.

"I mean that I go free, petite—or not at all."

"Then—then you will fall ill!" I falter, amid fast-gathering tears.

"No, no — not I, Gretchen. What can have put that idea into your wise little head?"

"It was papa, Monsieur Maurice . . . . he said you were" . . . .

Then, thinking suddenly how pale and wasted he had become of late, I hesitated.

"He said I was—What?"

"I—I don't like to tell!"

"But if I insist on being told? Come, Gretchen, I must know what Colonel Bernhard said."

"He said it was wrong to stay in like this week after week, and month after month. He—he said you were killing yourself by inches, Monsieur Maurice."

Monsieur Maurice laughed a short bitter laugh.

"Killing myself!" he repeated. "Well,

I hope not; for weary as I am of it, I would sooner go on bearing the burden of life than do my enemies the favour of dying out of their way."

The words, the look, the accent made me tremble. I never forgot them.

How could I forget that Monsieur Maurice had enemies—enemies who longed for his death ?

So the first blush of early Spring went by ; and the crocuses lived their little life and passed away ; and the primroses came in their turn, yellowing every shady nook in the scented woods ; and the larches put on their crimson tassels, and the laburnum its mantle of golden fringe, and the almond-tree burst into a leafless bloom of pink—and still Monsieur Maurice, adhering to his resolve, refused to stir one step beyond the threshold of his rooms.

Sad and monotonous now to the last degree, his life dragged heavily on. He wrote no more. He read, or seemed

to read, nearly the whole day through; but I often observed that his eyes ceased travelling along the lines, and that sometimes, for an hour and more together, he never turned a page.

"My little Gretchen," he said to me one day, "you are too much in these close rooms with me, and too little in the open air and sunshine."

"I had rather be here, Monsieur Maurice," I replied.

"But it is not good for you. You are losing all your roses."

"I don't think it is good for me to be out when you are always in-doors," I said, simply. "I don't care to run about, and—and I don't enjoy it."

He looked at me—opened his lips as if about to speak—then checked himself; walked to the window; and looked out silently.

The next morning, as soon as I made my appearance, he said:—

"The French lesson can wait awhile,

petite. Shall we go out for a walk instead?"

I clapped my hands for joy.

"Oh, Monsieur Maurice!" I cried, "are you in earnest?"

For in truth it seemed almost too good to be true. But Monsieur Maurice was in earnest, and we went—closely followed by the sentry.

It was a beautiful, sunny April day. We went down the terraces and slopes; and in and out of the flower-beds, now gaudy with Spring flowers; and on to the great central point whence the three avenues diverged. Here we rested on a bench under a lime-tree, not far from the huge stone basin where the fountain played every Sunday throughout the Summer, and the sleepy water-lilies rocked to and fro in the sunshine.

All was very quiet. A gardener went by now and then, with his wheelbarrow, or a gamekeeper followed by his dogs; a blackbird whistled low in the

bushes ; a cow-bell tinkled in the far distance ; the wood-pigeons murmured softly in the plantations. Other passers-by, other sounds there were none—save when a noisy party of flaxen-haired, bare-footed children came whooping and racing along, but turned suddenly shy and silent at sight of Monsieur Maurice sitting under the lime-tree.

The sentry, meanwhile, took up his position against the pedestal of a mutilated statue close by, and leaned upon his musket.

Monsieur Maurice was at first very silent. Once or twice he closed his eyes, as if listening to the gentle sounds upon the air—once or twice he cast an uneasy glance in the direction of the sentry ; but for a long time he scarcely moved or spoke.

At length, as if following up a train of previous thought, he said suddenly :—

“ There is no liberty. There are comparative degrees of captivity, and compa-

rative degrees of slavery; but of liberty, our social system knows nothing but the name. That sentry, if you asked him, would tell you that he is free. He pities me, perhaps, for being a prisoner. Yet he is even less free than myself. He is the slave of discipline. He must walk, hold up his head, wear his hair, dress, eat, and sleep according to the will of his superiors. If he disobeys, he is flogged. If he runs away, he is shot. At the present moment, he dares not lose sight of me for his life. I have done him no wrong; yet if I try to escape, it is his duty to shoot me. What is there in my captivity to equal the slavery of his condition? I cannot, it is true, go where I please; but, at least, I am not obliged to walk up and down a certain corridor, or in front of a certain sentry-box, for so many hours a day; and no power on earth could compel me to kill an innocent man who had never harmed me in his life."

In an instant I had the whole scene

before my eyes—Monsieur Maurice flying—pursued—shot down—brought back to die!

“But—but you won’t try to run away, Monsieur Maurice!” I cried, terrified at the picture my own fancy had drawn.

He darted a scrutinising glance at me, and said, after a moment’s hesitation:—

“If I intended to do so, petite, I should hardly tell Colonel Bernhard’s little daughter beforehand. Besides, why should I care now for liberty? What should I do with it? Have I not lost all that made it worth possessing—the Hero I worshipped, the Cause I honoured, the home I loved, the woman I adored? What better place for me than a prison . . . . unless the grave?”

He roused himself. He had been thinking aloud, unconscious of my presence; but seeing my startled eyes fixed full upon his face, he smiled, and said with a sudden change of voice and manner:—

“Go pluck me that namesake of yours

over yonder—the big white Marguerite on the edge of the grass plat. Thanks, petite. Now I'll be sworn you guess what I am going to do with it! No? Well, I am going to question these little sibylline leaves, and make the Marguerite tell me whether I am destined to a prison all the days of my life. What! you never heard of the old flower sortilege? Why, Gretchen, I thought every little German maiden learned it in the cradle with her mother tongue!"

"But how can the Marguerite answer you, Monsieur Maurice?" I exclaimed.

"You shall see—but I must tell you first that the flower is not used to pronounce upon such serious matters. She is the oracle of village lads and lasses—not of grave prisoners like myself."

And with this, half sadly, half playfully, he began stripping the leaves off one by one, and repeating over and over again:—

"Tell me, sweet Marguerite, shall I be free? Soon—in time—perhaps—never!

Soon—in time—perhaps—never! Soon—  
in time—perhaps—”

It was the last leaf.

“Pshaw!” he said, tossing away the  
stalk with an impatient laugh. “You  
could have given me as good an answer  
as that, little Gretchen. Let us go in.”

## CHAPTER VIII.

IT was about a week after this when I was startled out of my deepest midnight sleep by a rush of many feet, and a fierce and sudden knocking at my father's bedroom door—the door opposite my own.

I sat up, trembling. A bright blaze gleamed along the threshold, and high above the clamour of tongues outside, I recognised my father's voice, quick, sharp, imperative. Then a door was opened and banged. Then came the rush of feet again—then silence.

It was a strange, wild hubbub; and it had all come, and gone, and was over in less than a minute. But what was it?

Seeing that fiery line along the thres-

hold, I had thought for a moment that the Château was on fire; but the light vanished with those who brought it, and all was darkness again.

“Bertha!” I cried tremulously.  
“Bertha!”

Now Bertha was my Rhenish hand-maiden, and she slept in a closet opening off my room; but Bertha was as deaf to my voice as one of the Seven Sleepers.

Suddenly a shrill trumpet-call rang out in the courtyard.

I sprang out of bed, flew to Bertha, and shook her with all my strength till she woke.

“Bertha! Bertha!” I cried. “Wake up—strike a light—dress me quickly! I must know what is the matter!”

In vain Bertha yawns, rubs her eyes, protests that I have had a bad dream, and that nothing is the matter. Get up she must; dress herself and me in the twinkling of an eye; and go upon whatsoever dance I choose to lead her.

My father is gone, and his door stands wide open. We turn to the stairs, and a cold wind rushes up in our faces. We go down, and find the side-door that leads to the courtyard unfastened and ajar. There is not a soul in the courtyard. There is not the faintest glimmer of light from the guard-house windows. The sentry who walks perpetually to and fro in front of the gate is not at his post; and the gate is wide open !

Even Bertha sees by this time that something strange is afoot, and stares at me with a face of foolish wonder.

“Ach, Herr Gott !” she cries, clapping her hands together, “what’s that ?”

It is very faint, very distant; but quite audible in the dead silence of the night. In an instant I know what it is that has happened !

“It is the report of a musket !” I exclaim, seizing her by the hand, and dragging her across the courtyard. “Quick ! quick ! Oh, Monsieur Maurice ! Monsieur Maurice !”

The night is very dark. There is no moon, and the stars, glimmering through a veil of haze, give little light. But we run as recklessly as if it were bright day, past the barracks, past the parade-ground, and round to the great gates on the garden side of the Château. These, however, are closed, and the sentry, standing watchful and motionless, with his musket made ready, refuses to let us through.

In vain I remind him that I am privileged, and that none of these gates are ever closed against me. The man is inexorable.

"No, Fräulein Gretchen," he says, "I dare not. This is not a fit hour for you to be out. Pray go home."

"But Gaspar, good Gaspar," I plead, clinging to the gate with both hands, "tell me if he has escaped! Hark; oh, hark! there it is again!"

And another, and another shot rings through the still night-air.

The sentry almost stamps with impatience.

“Go home, dear little Fräulein! Go home at once,” he says. “There is danger abroad to-night. I cannot leave my post, or I would take you home myself . . . . Holy Saint Christopher! they are coming this way! Go—go—what would his Excellency the Governor say, if he found you here?”

I see quick gleams of wandering lights among the trees—I hear a distant shout! Then, seized by a sudden panic, I turn and fly, with Bertha at my heels—fly back the way I came, never pausing till I find myself once more at the courtyard gate. Here—breathless, trembling, panting—I stop to listen and look back. All is silent;—as silent as before.

“But, *liebe* Gretchen,” says Bertha, as breathless as myself, “what is to do to-night?”

There is a coming murmur on the air.

There is a red glow reflected on the barrack windows . . . . they are coming ! I turn suddenly cold and giddy.

"Hush, Bertha !" I whisper, "we must not stay here. Papa will be angry ! Let us go up to the corridor window."

So we go back into the house, upstairs the way we came, and station ourselves at the corridor window, which looks into the courtyard.

Slowly the glow broadens ; slowly the sound resolves itself into an irregular tramp of many feet and a murmur of many voices.

Then suddenly the courtyard is filled with soldiers and lighted torches, and . . . and I clasp my hands over my eyes in an agony of terror, lest the picture I drew a few days since should be coming true.

"What do you see, Bertha ?" I falter. "Do you — do you see Monsieur Maurice ?"

"No, but I see Gottlieb Kolb, and Corporal Fritz, and . . . yes — here is Monsieur Maurice between two soldiers, and his Excellency the Colonel walking beside them !"

I looked up, and my heart gave a leap of gladness. He was not dead—he was not even wounded ! He had been pursued and captured ; but at least he was safe !

They stopped just under the corridor window. The torchlight fell full upon their faces. Monsieur Maurice looked pale and composed ; perhaps just a shade haughtier than usual. My father had his drawn sword in his hand.

"Corporal Fritz," he said, turning to a soldier near him, "conduct the prisoner to his room, and post two sentries at his door, and one under his windows." Then turning to Monsieur Maurice, "I thank God, Sir," he said gravely, "that you have not paid for your imprudence with your life. I have the honour to wish you good night."

Monsieur Maurice ceremoniously took off his hat.

“Good night, Colonel Bernhard,” he said. “I beg you, however, to remember that I had withdrawn my parole.”

“I remember it, Monsieur Maurice,” replied my father, drawing himself up, and returning the salutation.

Monsieur Maurice then crossed the courtyard with his guards, and entered the Château by the door leading to the state apartments. My father, after standing for a moment as if lost in thought, turned away and went over to the guard-house.

The soldiers then dispersed, or gathered into little knots of twos and threes, and talked in low voices of the events of the night.

“Accomplices!” said one, just close against the window where Bertha and I still lingered. “Liebe Mutter! I’ll take my oath he had one! Why, it was I who first caught sight of the prisoner gliding

through the trees—I saw him as plainly as I see you now—I covered him with my musket—I wouldn't have given a copper pfennig for his life, when paff! at the very moment I pulled the trigger, out steps a fellow from behind my shoulder, knocks up my musket, and disappears like a flash of lightning—Heaven only knows where, for I never laid eyes on him again!”

“What was he like?” asks another soldier, incredulously.

“Like? How should I know? It was as dark as pitch. I just caught a glimpse of him in the flash of the powder—an ugly, brown-looking devil he seemed! but he was gone in a breath, and I had no time to look for him.”

The soldiers round about burst out laughing.

“Hold, Karl!” says one, slapping him boisterously on the shoulder. “You are a good shot, but you missed aim for once. No need to conjure up a brown

devil to account for that, old comrade!"

Karl, finding his story discredited, retorted angrily; and a quarrel was fast brewing, when the sergeant on guard came up and ordered the men to their several quarters.

"Holy Saint Bridget!" said Bertha, shivering, "how cold it is!—and there, I declare, is the Convent clock striking half after one! Liebe Gretchen, you really must go to bed—what would your father say?"

So we both crept back to bed. Bertha was asleep again almost before she had laid her head upon her pillow; but I lay awake till dawn of day.

## CHAPTER IX.

IT was in my father's disposition to be both strict and indulgent—that is to say, as a father he was all tenderness, and as a soldier all discipline. His men both loved and feared him ; but I, who never had cause to fear him in my life, loved him with all my heart, and never thought of him except as the fondest of parents. Chiefly, perhaps, for my sake, he had up to this time been extremely indulgent in all that regarded Monsieur Maurice. Now, however, he conceived that it was his duty to be indulgent no longer. He was responsible for the person of Monsieur Maurice, and Monsieur Maurice

had attempted to escape; from this moment, therefore, Monsieur Maurice must be guarded, hedged in, isolated, like any other prisoner under similar circumstances—at all events until further instructions should arrive from Berlin. So my father, as it was his duty to do, wrote straight-way to the Minister of War, doubled all previous precautions, and forbade me to go near the prisoner's rooms on any pretext whatever.

I neither coaxed nor pleaded. I had an instinctive feeling that the thing was inevitable, and that I had nothing to do but to suffer and obey. And I did suffer bitterly. Day after day, I hung about the terraces under his windows, watching for the glimpse that hardly ever came. Night after night I sobbed till I was tired, and fell asleep with his name upon my lips. It was a childish grief; but not therefore the less poignant. It was a childish love, too; necessarily transient and irrational, as such childish passions are; but not

therefore the less real. The dull web of my later life has not been without its one golden thread of romance (alas! how long since tarnished!), but not even that dream has left a deeper scar upon my memory than did the hero-worship of my first youth. It was something more than love; it was adoration. To be with him was measureless content—to be banished from him was something akin to despair.

So Monsieur Maurice and his little Gretchen were parted. No more happy French lessons—no more walks—no more stories told by the firelight in the gloaming! All was over; all was blank. But for how long? Surely not for ever!

“Perhaps the king will think fit to hand him over to some other gaoler,” said my father one day; “and, by Heaven! I’d thank him more heartily for that boon than for the order of the Red Eagle!”

My heart sank at the thought. Many and many a time had I pictured to myself

what it would be if he were set at liberty, and with what mingled joy and grief I should bid him good-bye; but it had never occurred to me as a possibility that he might be transferred to another prison-house.

Thus a week—ten days—a fortnight went by, and still there came nothing from Berlin. I began to hope at last that nothing would come, and that matters would settle down in time, and be as they were before. But of such vain hopes I was speedily and roughly disabused; and in this wise.

It was a gloomy afternoon—one of those dun-coloured afternoons that seem all the more dismal for coming in the midst of Spring. I had been out of the way somewhere (wandering to and fro, I believe, like a dreary little ghost, among the grim galleries of the state apartments), and was going home at dusk to be in readiness for my father, who always came in after the afternoon parade.

Coming up the passage out of which our rooms opened, I heard voices—my father's and another. Concluding that he had Corporal Fritz with him, I went in unhesitatingly. To my surprise, I found the lamp lighted, and a strange officer sitting face to face with my father at the table.

The stranger was in the act of speaking; my father listening, with a grave, intent look upon his face.

.... “and if he had been shot, Colonel Bernhard, the State would have been well rid of a troublesome burden.”

My father saw me in the doorway, put up his hand with a warning gesture, and said hastily :—

“You here, Gretchen! Go into the dining-room, my child, till I send for you.”

The dining-room, as I have said elsewhere, opened out of the sitting-room which also served for my father's bureau. I had therefore to cross the room, and

so caught a full view of the stranger's face. He was a sallow, dark man, with iron grey hair cut close to his head, a hard mouth, a cold grey eye, and a deep furrow between his brows. He wore a blue military frock buttoned to the chin; and a plain cocked hat lay beside his gloves upon the table.

I went into the dining-room and closed the door. It was half-door, half-window, the upper panels being made of ground glass, so as to let in a borrowed light; for the little room was at all times somewhat of the darkest. Such as it was, this borrowed light was now all I had; for the dining-room fire had gone out hours ago, and though there were candles on the chimney-piece, I had no means of lighting them. So I groped my way to the first chair I could find, and waited my father's summons.

"And if he had been shot, Colonel Bernhard, the State would have been well rid of a troublesome burden."

It was all I had heard; but it was enough to set me thinking. "If he had been shot" . . . . If who had been shot? My fears answered that question but too readily. Who, then, was this new-comer? Was he from Berlin? And if from Berlin, what orders did he bring? A vague terror of coming evil fell upon me. I trembled—I held my breath. I tried to hear what was being said, but in vain. The voices in the next room went on in a low incessant murmur; but of that murmur I could not distinguish a word.

Then the sounds swelled a little, as if the speakers were becoming more earnest. And then, forgetting all I had ever heard or been taught about the heinousness of eavesdropping, I got up very softly and crept close against the door.

"That is to say, you dislike the responsibility, Colonel Bernhard."

These were the first words I heard.

"I dislike the office," said my father,

bluntly. "I'd almost as soon be a hangman as a gaoler."

The stranger here said something that my ear failed to catch. Then my father spoke again.

"To tell you the truth, Herr Count, I only wish it would please His Excellency to transfer him elsewhere."

The stranger paused a moment, and then said in a low but very distinct voice :—

"Supposing, Colonel Bernhard, that you were yourself transferred—shall we say to Königsberg? Would you prefer it to Brühl?"

"Königsberg!" exclaimed my father in a tone of profound amazement.

"The appointment, I believe, is worth six hundred thalers a year more than Brühl," said the stranger.

"But it has never been offered to me," said my father, in his simple straightforward way. "Of course I should prefer it—but what of that? And what has Königsberg to do with Monsieur Maurice?"

“Ah, true—Monsieur Maurice! Well, to return then to Monsieur Maurice—how would it be, do you think, somewhat to relax the present vigilance?”

“To relax it?”

“To leave a door or a window unguarded now and then, for instance. In short, to—to provide certain facilities . . . . you understand?”

“Facilities?” exclaimed my father, incredulously. “Facilities for escape?”

“Well—yes; if you think fit to put it so plainly,” replied the other, with a short little cough, followed by a snap like the opening and shutting of a snuff-box.

“But—but in the name of the Eleven Thousand Virgins, why wait for the man to run away? Why not give him his liberty, and get rid of him pleasantly?”

“Because—ahem!—because, you see, Colonel Bernhard, it would not then be possible to pursue him,” said the stranger, drily.

"To pursue him?"

"Just so—and to shoot him."

I heard the sound of a chair pushed violently back; and my father's shadow, vague and menacing, started up with him, and fell across the door.

"What?" he shouted, in a terrible voice. "Are you taking me at my word? Are you offering me the hangman's office?"

Then, with a sudden change of tone and manner, he added:—

"But—I must have misunderstood you. It is impossible."

"We have both altogether misunderstood each other, Colonel Bernhard," said the stranger, stiffly. "I had supposed you would be willing to serve the State, even at the cost of some violence to your prejudices."

"Great God! then you did mean it!" said my father, with a strange horror in his voice.

"I meant—to serve the King. I

also hoped to advance the interests of Colonel Bernhard," replied the other, haughtily.

"My sword is the King's—my blood is the King's, to the last drop," said my father in great agitation; "but my honour—my honour is my own!"

"Enough, Colonel Bernhard; enough. We will drop the subject."

And again I heard the little dry cough, and the snap of the snuff-box.

A long silence followed, my father walking to and fro with a quick, heavy step; the stranger, apparently, still sitting in his place at the table.

"Should you, on reflection, see cause to take a different view of your duty, Colonel Bernhard," he said at last, "you have but to say so before. . . ."

"I can never take a different view of it, Herr Count!" interrupted my father, vehemently.

"—before I take my departure in the

morning," continued the other, with studied composure; "in the meanwhile, be pleased to remember that you are answerable for the person of your prisoner. Either he must not escape, or he must not escape with life."

My father's shadow bent its head.

"And now, with your permission, I will go to my room."

My father rang the bell, and when Bertha came, bade her light the Count von Rettel to his chamber.

Hearing them leave the room, I opened the door very softly and hesitatingly, scarce knowing whether to come out or not. I saw my father standing with his back towards me and his face still turned in the direction by which they had gone out. I saw him throw up his clenched hands, and shake them wildly above his head.

"And it was for this!—for this!" he said fiercely. "A bribe! God of Heaven! He offered me Königsberg as a bribe! Oh,

that I should have lived to be treated as an assassin !”

His voice broke into hoarse sobs. He dropped into a chair—he covered his face with his hands.

He had forgotten that I was in the next room, and now I dared not remind him of my presence. His emotion terrified me. It was the first time I had seen a man shed tears; and this alone, let the man be whom he might, would have seemed terrible to me at any time. How much more terrible when those tears were tears of outraged honour, and when the man who shed them was my father !

I trembled from head to foot. I had an instinctive feeling that I ought not to look upon his agony. I shrank back—closed the door—held my breath, and waited.

Presently the sound of sobbing ceased. Then he sighed heavily twice or thrice—got up abruptly—threw a couple of logs on the fire, and left the room. The next moment I heard him unlock the door

under the stairs, and go into the cellar. I seized the opportunity to escape, and stole up to my own room as rapidly and noiselessly as my trembling knees would carry me.

I had my supper with Bertha that evening, and the Count ate at my father's table; but I afterwards learned that, though the Governor of Brühl himself waited ceremoniously upon his guest and served him with his best, he neither broke bread nor drank wine with him.

I saw that unwelcome guest no more. I heard his voice under the window, and the clatter of his horse's hoofs as he rode away in the early morning; but that was long enough before Bertha came to call me.

## CHAPTER X.

**W**EEKS went by. Spring warmed, and ripened, and blossomed into Summer. Gardens and terraces were ablaze once more with many-coloured flowers; fountains played and sparkled in the sunshine; and travellers bound for Cologne or Bonn put up again at Brühl in the midst of the day's journey, to bait their horses and see the Château on their way.

For in these years just following the Peace of Paris, the Continent was overrun by travellers, two thirds of whom were English. The diligence—the great, top-heavy, lumbering diligence of fifty years ago—used then to come lurching and thundering down the main street five

times a week throughout the Summer season; and as many as three and four travelling carriages a day would pass through in fine weather. The landlord of the "Lion d'Or" kept fifty horses in his stables in those days, and drove a thriving trade.

So the Summer came, and brought the stir of outer life into the precincts of our sleepy Château; but brought no better change in the fortunes of Monsieur Maurice. Ever since that fatal night, the terms of his imprisonment had been more rigorous than ever. Till then, he might, if he would, walk twice a week in the grounds with a soldier at his heels; but now he was placed in strict confinement in his own two rooms, with one sentry always pacing the corridor outside his door, and another under his windows. And across each of those windows might now be seen a couple of bright new iron bars, thick as a man's wrist, forged and fixed there by the village blacksmith.

I have no words to tell how the sight of those bars revolted me. If instead of being a little helpless girl, I had been a man like my father, and a servant of the State, I think they would have made a rebel of me.

Worse, however, than iron bars, locked doors, and guarded corridors, was Hartmann—Herr Ludwig Hartmann, as he was styled in the despatch that announced his coming—a pale, slight, silent man, with colourless grey eyes and white eyelashes, who came direct from Berlin about a month later, to act as Monsieur Maurice's "personal attendant." Stealthy, watchful, secret, civil, he established himself in a room adjoining the prisoner's apartment, and was as much at home in the course of a couple of hours as if he had been settled there from the first.

He brought with him a paper of instructions, and, having on his arrival submitted these instructions to my father, he at once took up a certain routine of duties

that never varied. He brushed Monsieur Maurice's clothes, waited upon him at table, attended him in his bed-room, was always within hearing, always on the alert, and haunted the prisoner like his shadow. Not even a housemaid could go in to sweep but he was present. Now the man's perpetual presence was intolerable to Monsieur Maurice. He had borne all else with patience, but this last tyranny was more than he could endure without murmuring. He appealed to my father; but my father, though Governor of Brühl, was powerless to help him. Hartmann had presented his instructions as a minister presents his credentials, and those instructions emanated from Berlin. So the new comer, valet, gaoler, spy as he was, became an established fact, and was detested throughout the Château—by no one more heartily than myself.

I still, however, saw Monsieur Maurice now and then. My father often took me with him in his rounds, and always

when he visited his prisoner. Sometimes, too, he would leave me for an hour with my friend, and call for me again on his way back; so that we were not wholly parted even now. But Hartmann took care never to leave us alone. Before my father's footsteps were out of hearing, he would be in the room; silent, unobtrusive, perfectly civil, but watchful as a lynx. We could not talk before him freely. Nothing was as it used to be. It was better than total banishment; it was better than never hearing his voice; but the constraint was hard to bear, and the pain of these meetings was almost greater than the pleasure.

And now, as I approach that part of my narrative which possesses the deepest interest for myself, I hesitate—hesitate and draw back before the great mystery in which it is involved. I ask myself what interpretation the world will put upon facts for which I can vouch; upon events which I myself witnessed? I can-

not prove those events. They happened over fifty years ago; but they are as vividly present to my memory as if they had taken place yesterday. I can only relate them in their order, knowing them to be true, and leaving each reader to judge of them according to his convictions.

It was about the middle of the second week in June. Hartmann had been about six weeks at Brühl, and all was going on in the usual dull routine, when that routine was suddenly broken by the arrival of three mounted dragoons—an officer and two privates—whose errand, whatever it might be, had the effect of throwing the whole establishment into sudden and unwonted confusion.

I was out in the grounds when they arrived, and came back at midday to find no dinner on the table, no cook in the kitchen; but a full-dress parade going on in the courtyard, and all the interior of the Château in a state of wild commotion. Here were peasants bringing in wood,

gardeners laden with vegetables and flowers, women running to and fro with baskets full of linen, and all to the accompaniment of such a hammering, bell-ringing, and clattering of tongues as I had never heard before.

I stood bewildered, not knowing what to do, or where to go.

“What is the matter? What has happened? What are you doing?” I asked, first of one and then of another; but they were all too busy to answer.

“Ach, lieber Gott!” said one, “I’ve no time for talking!”

“Don’t ask me, little Fräulein,” said another. “I have eight windows to clean up yonder, and only one pair of hands to do them with!”

“If you want to know what is to do,” said a third impatiently, “you had better come and see.”

The head-gardener’s son came by with two pots of magnificent geraniums, one under each arm.

“ Where are you going with those flowers, Wilhelm ?” I asked, running after him.

“ They are for the state salon, Fräulein Gretchen,” he replied, and hurried on.

For the state salon ! I ran round to the side of the grand entrance. There were soldiers putting up banners in the hall ; others helping to carry furniture up stairs ; carpenters with ladders ; women with brooms and brushes ; and Corporal Fritz bustling hither and thither, giving orders, and seeing after everything.

“ But Corporal Fritz !” I exclaimed, “ what are all these people about ?”

“ We are preparing the state apartments, dear little Fräulein,” replied Corporal Fritz, rubbing his hands with an air of great enjoyment.

“ But why ? For whom ?”

“ For whom ? Why, for the King, to be sure ;” and Corporal Fritz clapped his hand to the side of his hat like a loyal soldier. “ Don’t you know, dear little Fräulein,

lein, that His Majesty sleeps here to-night, on his way to Ehrenbreitstein?"

This was news indeed! I ran up stairs—I was all excitement—I got in everybody's way—I tormented everybody with questions. I saw the table being laid in the grand salon where the King was to sup, and the bedstead being put up in the little salon where he was to sleep, and the ante-room being prepared for his officers. All was being made ready as rapidly, and decorated as tastefully as the scanty resources of the Château would permit. I recognised much of the furniture from the attics above, and this, faded though it was, being helped out with flowers, flags, and greenery, made the great echoing rooms look gay and habitable.

By and by, my father came round to see how the work was going on, and finding me in the midst of it, took me by the hand and led me away.

"You are not wanted here, my little Gretchen," he said; "and, indeed, all

the world is so busy to-day that I scarcely know what to do with thee."

"Take me to Monsieur Maurice!" I said, coaxingly.

"Ay—so I will," said my father; "with him, at all events, you will be out of the way."

So he took me round to Monsieur Maurice's rooms, and told me as we went along that the King had only given him six hours' notice, and that in order to furnish his Majesty's bed and his Majesty's supper, he had bought up all the poultry and eggs, and borrowed well-nigh all the silver, glass, and linen in the town.

By this time we were almost at Monsieur Maurice's door. A sudden thought flashed upon me. I pulled him back, out of the sentry's hearing.

"Oh, father!" I cried eagerly, "will you not ask the King to let Monsieur Maurice free?"

My father shook his head.

"Nay," he said, "I must not do that my little Mädchen. And look you—not

a word that the King is coming here to-night. It would only make the prisoner restless, and could avail nothing. Promise me to be silent."

So I promised, and he left me at the door without going in.

I spent all the afternoon with Monsieur Maurice. He divided his luncheon with me; he gave me a French lesson, he told me stories. I had not had such a happy day for months. Hartmann, it is true, was constantly in and out of the room, but even Hartmann was less in the way than usual. He seemed absent and pre-occupied, and was therefore not so watchful as at other times. In the meanwhile I could still hear, though faintly, the noises in the rooms below; but all became quiet about five o'clock in the evening, and Monsieur Maurice, who had been told they were only cleaning the state apartments, asked no questions.

Meanwhile the afternoon waned, and the sun bent westward, and still no one

came to fetch me away. My father knew where I was; Bertha was probably too busy to think about me; and I was only too glad to stay as long as Monsieur Maurice was willing to keep me. By and by, about half-past six o'clock, the sky became overclouded, and we heard a low muttering of very distant thunder. At seven, it rained heavily.

Now it was Monsieur Maurice's custom to dine late, and ours to dine early; but then, as his luncheon hour corresponded with our dinner-hour, and his dinner fell only a little later than our supper, it came to much the same thing, and did not therefore seem strange. So it happened that just as the storm came up, Hartmann began to prepare the table. Then, in the midst of the rain and the wind, my quick ear caught a sound of drums and bugles, and I knew the King was come. Monsieur Maurice evidently heard nothing; but I could see by Hartmann's face (he was laying the cloth and making a noise

with the glasses) that he knew all, and was listening.

After this I heard no more. The wind raved; the rain pattered; the gloom thickened; and at half-past seven, when the soup was brought to table, it was so dark that Monsieur Maurice called for lights. He would not, however, allow the curtains to be drawn. He liked, he said, to sit and watch the storm.

A cover was laid for me at his right hand; but my supper hour was past, and what with the storm without, the heaviness in the air, and the excitement of the day, I was no longer hungry. So, having eaten a little soup and sipped some wine from Monsieur Maurice's glass, I went and curled myself up in an easy chair close to the window, and watched the driving mists as they swept across the park, and the tossing of the tree-tops against the sky.

It was a wild evening, lit by lurid gleams and openings in the clouds; and it seemed all the wilder by contrast with

the quiet room and the dim radiance of the wax lights on the table. There was a soft halo round each little flame, and a dreamy haze in the atmosphere, from the midst of which Monsieur Maurice's pale face stood out against the shadowy background, like a head in a Dutch painting.

We were both very silent; partly because Hartmann was waiting, and partly, perhaps, because we had been talking all the afternoon. Monsieur Maurice ate slowly, and there were long intervals between the courses, during which he leaned his elbow on the table and his chin on his hand, looking across towards the window and the storm. Hartmann, meanwhile, seemed to be always listening. I could see that he was holding his breath, and trying to catch every faint echo from below.

It was a long, long dinner, and probably seemed all the longer to me because I did not partake of it. As for Monsieur

Maurice, he tasted some dishes, and sent more away untouched.

"I think it is getting lighter," he said by and by. "Does it still rain?"

"Yes," I replied; "it is coming down steadily."

"We must open the window presently," he said. "I love the fresh smell that comes with the rain."

Here the conversation dropped again, and Hartmann, having been gone for a moment, came back with a dish of stewed fruit.

Then, for the first time, I observed there was a second attendant in the room.

"Will you not have some raspberries, Gretchen?" said Monsieur Maurice.

I shook my head. I was too much startled by the sight of the strange man, to answer him in words.

Who could he be? Where had he come from? He was standing behind Monsieur Maurice, far back in the gloom, near the door—a small, dark man, apparently; but

so placed with regard to the table and the lights, that it was impossible to make out his features with distinctness.

Monsieur Maurice just tasted the raspberries and sent his plate away.

"How heavy the air of the room is!" he said. "Give me some Seltzer-water, and open that farthest window."

Hartmann reversed the order. He opened the window first; and as he did so, I saw that his hand shook upon the hasp, and that his face was deadly pale.

He then turned to the sideboard and opened a stone bottle that had been standing there since the beginning of dinner. He filled a tumbler with the sparkling water.

At the moment when he placed this tumbler on the salver—at the moment when he handed it to Monsieur Maurice—the other man glided quickly forward. I saw his bright eyes and his brown face in the full light. I saw *two hands* put out to take the glass; a brown

hand and a white—his hand, and the hand of Monsieur Maurice. I saw—yes, before Heaven! as I live to remember and record it, I saw the brown hand grasp the tumbler and dash it to the ground!

“Pshaw!” said Monsieur Maurice, brushing the Seltzer-water impatiently from his sleeve, “how came you to upset it?”

But Hartmann, livid and trembling, stood speechless, staring at the door.

“It was the other man!” said I, starting up with a strange kind of breathless terror upon me. “He threw it on the ground—I saw him do it—where is he gone? what has become of him?”

“The other man! What other man?” said Monsieur Maurice. “My little Gretchen, you are dreaming.”

“No, no, I am not dreaming. There was another man—a brown man! Hartmann saw him—”

“A brown man!” echoed Monsieur Maurice. Then catching sight of Hartmann’s face, he pushed his chair back,

looked at him steadily and sternly; and said, with a sudden change of voice and manner:—

“There is something wrong here. What does it mean? You saw a man—both of you? What was he like?”

“A brown man,” I said again. “A brown man with bright eyes.”

“And you?” said Monsieur Maurice, turning to Hartmann.

“I—I thought I saw something,” stammered the attendant, with a violent effort at composure. “But it was nothing.”

Monsieur Maurice looked at him as if he would look him through; got up, still looking at him; went to the sideboard, and, still looking at him, filled another tumbler with Seltzer-water.

“Drink that,” he said, very quietly.

The man’s lips moved, but he uttered never a word.

“Drink that,” said Monsieur Maurice for the second time, and more sternly.

But Hartmann, instead of drinking it,

instead of answering, threw up his hands in a wild way, and rushed out of the room.

Monsieur Maurice stood for a moment absorbed in thought; then wrote some words upon a card, and gave the card into my hand.

“For thy father, little one,” he said. “Give it to no one but himself, and give it to him the first moment thou seest him. There’s matter of life and death in it.”

## CHAPTER XI.

HOW the King supped, how the King slept, and what he thought of his Château of Augustenberg, which he now saw for the first time, are matters respecting which I have no information. I only know that I had fallen asleep on Monsieur Maurice's sofa when Bertha came at ten o'clock that night to fetch me home; that I was very drowsy and unwilling to be moved; and that I woke in the morning dreaming of a brown man with bright eyes, and calling upon Monsieur Maurice to make haste and come before he should again have time to vanish away.

It was a lovely morning; bright and fresh, and sunshiny after the night's

storm. My first thought was of Monsieur Maurice, and the card he had entrusted to my keeping. I had it still. My father was not at home when I came back last night. He was in attendance on the King, and did not return till long after I was asleep in my own little bed. This morning, early as I awoke, he was gone again, on the same duty.

I jumped up. I bade Bertha dress me quickly. "I must go to papa," I said. "I have a card for him from Monsieur Maurice."

"Nay, liebe Gretchen," said Bertha, "he is with the King."

But I told myself that I would find him, and see him, and give the card into his own hands, though a dozen kings were in the way. I could not read what was written on the card. I could read print easily and rapidly, but handwriting not at all. I knew, however, that it was urgent. Had he not said that it was matter of life or death?

I hurried to dress ; I hurried to get out. I could not rest, I could not eat till I had given up the card. As good fortune would have it, the first person I met was Coporal Fritz. I asked him where I could find my father.

“Dear little Fräulein,” said Corporal Fritz, “you cannot see him just yet. He is with the King.”

“But I must see him,” I said. “I must—indeed, I must. Go to him for me—please go to him, dear, good Corporal Fritz, and tell him his little Gretchen must speak to him, if only for one moment !”

“But dear little Fräulein” . . . .

“Is the King at breakfast?” I interrupted.

“At breakfast ! Eh, then, our gallant King hath a soldier’s habits. His Majesty breakfasted at six this morning, and is gone out betimes to visit his hunting-lodge at Falkenlust.”

“And my father?”

“His Excellency the Governor is in attendance upon the King.”

“Then I will go to Falkenlust.”

Corporal Fritz shook his head; shrugged his shoulders; took a pinch of snuff.

“’Tis a long road to Falkenlust, dear little Fräulein,” said he; “and His Excellency, methinks, would be better pleased” . . . .

I stayed to hear no more, but ran off at full speed down the terraces, straight to the Round Point and the fountain, and along the great avenue that led to Falkenlust. I ran till I was out of breath—then rested—then ran again, on, and on, and on, till the road lengthened and narrowed behind me, and the Château of Augustenburg looked almost as small in the distance at one end as the Falkenlust Lodge at the other.

Then all at once, far, far away, I saw a moving group of figures. They grew larger and more distinct—they were coming towards me! I had run till I

could run no farther. Panting and breathless, I leaned against a tree, and waited.

And now, as they drew nearer, I saw that the group consisted of some eight or ten officers, two of whom were walking somewhat in advance of the rest. One of the two wore a plain cocked hat and an undress military frock; the other was in full uniform, and wore two or three glittering medals on his breast. This other was my father. I scarcely looked at the first. I never even asked myself whether he was, or was not the King. I had no eyes, no thought for any but my father.

So I stood, eager and breathless, on the verge of the gravel. So they every moment drew nearer the spot where I was standing. As they came close, my father's eyes met mine. He shook his head, and frowned. He thought I had come there to stare at the King.

Nothing daunted, I took two steps forward. I had Monsieur Maurice's card in my hand. I held it out to him.

"Read it," I said. "It is from Monsieur Maurice."

But he crushed it in his hand without looking at it, and waved me back authoritatively.

"At once!" I cried; "at once!"

The gentleman in the blue frock stopped and smiled.

"Is this your little girl, Colonel Bernhard?" he asked.

My father replied by a low bow.

The strange gentleman beckoned me to draw nearer.

"A golden-haired little Mädchen!" said he. "Come hither, pretty one, and tell me your name."

I knew then that he was the King. I trembled and blushed.

"My name is Gretchen," I said.

"And you have brought a letter for your father?"

"It is not a letter," I said. "It is a card. It is from Monsieur Maurice."

"And who is Monsieur Maurice?" asked the King.

“So please your Majesty,” said my father, answering the question for me, “Monsieur Maurice is the prisoner I hold in charge.”

The smile went out of the King’s face.

“The prisoner!” he repeated, inquiringly. “What prisoner?”

“The state-prisoner whom I received, according to your Majesty’s command, eight months ago—Monsieur Maurice.”

“Monsieur Maurice!” echoed the King.

“I know the gentleman by no other name, please your Majesty,” said my father.

The King looked grave.

“I never heard of Monsieur Maurice,” he said, “I know of no state-prisoner here.”

“The prisoner was consigned to my keeping by your Majesty’s Minister of War,” said my father.

“By Von Bulow?”

My father bowed.

“Upon whose authority?”

“In your Majesty’s name.”

The King frowned.

“What papers did you receive with your prisoner, Colonel Bernhard?” he said.

“None, your Majesty—except a despatch from your Majesty’s Minister of War, delivered a day or two before the prisoner arrived at Brühl.”

“How did he come? and where did he come from?”

“He came in a close carriage, your Majesty, attended by two officers who left Brühl the same night and whose names and persons are unknown to me. I do not know where he came from. I only know that they had taken the last relay of horses from Cologne.”

“You were not told his offence?”

“I was told nothing, your Majesty, except that Monsieur Maurice was an enemy to the state, and—”

“And what?”

My father’s hand went up to his moustache, as it was wont to do in perplexity.

“I—so please your Majesty, I think

there is some foul mystery in it at bottom," he said, bluntly. "There hath been that thing proposed to me that I am ashamed to repeat. I do beseech your Majesty that some investigation. . . ."

His eyes happened for a moment to rest upon the card. He stammered—changed colour—stopped short in his sentence—took off his hat—laid the card upon it—and so handed it to the King.

His Majesty Frederick William the Third of Prussia was, like most of the princes of his house, tanned, soldierly, and fresh-complexioned; but florid as he was, there came a darker flush into his face as he read what Monsieur Maurice had written.

"An attempt upon his life!" he exclaimed. "The thing is not possible."

My father was silent. The king looked at him keenly.

"Is it possible, Colonel Bernhard?" he said.

"I think it may be possible, your Majesty," replied my father in a low voice.

The King frowned.

"Colonel Bernhard," he said, "how can that be? You are responsible for the safety as well as the person of any prisoner committed to your charge."

"So long as the prisoner is left wholly to my charge I can answer for his safety with my head, so please your Majesty," said my father, reddening; "but not when he is provided with a special attendant over whom I have no control."

"What special attendant? Where did he come from? Who sent him?"

"I believe he came from Berlin, your Majesty. He was sent by your Majesty's Minister of War. His name is Hartmann."

The King stood thinking. His officers had fallen out of earshot, and were talking together in a little knot some four yards behind. I was still standing on the spot to which the King had called me. He looked round, and saw my anxious face.

"What, still there, little one?" he

said. "You have not heard what we were saying?"

"Yes," I said; "I heard it."

"The child may have heard, your Majesty," interposed my father, hastily; "but she did not understand. Run home, Gretchen. Make thy obeisance to his Majesty, and run home quickly."

But I had understood every word. I knew that Monsieur Maurice's life had been in danger. I knew the King was all-powerful. Terrified at my own boldness — terrified at the thought of my father's anger — trembling — sobbing — scarcely conscious of what I was saying, I fell at the King's feet, and cried:—

"Save him—save him, Sire! Don't let them kill poor Monsieur Maurice! Forgive him—please forgive him, and let him go home again!"

My father seized me by the hand, forced me to rise, and dragged me back more roughly than he had ever touched me in his life.

"I beseech your Majesty's pardon for the child," he said. "She knows no better."

But the King smiled, and called me back to him.

"Nay, nay," he said, laying his hand upon my head, "do not be vexed with her. So, little one, you and Monsieur Maurice are friends?"

I nodded; for I was still crying, and too frightened at what I had done to be able to speak.

"And you love him dearly?"

"Better than anyone—in the world—except Papa," I faltered, through my tears.

"Not better than your brothers and sisters?"

"I have no brothers and sisters," I replied, my courage coming back again by degrees. "I have no one but Papa, and Monsieur Maurice, and Annt Martha Baur—and I love Monsieur Maurice a thousand, thousand times more than Aunt Martha Baur!"

There came a merry sparkle into the

King's eyes, and my father turned his face away to conceal a smile.

"But if Monsieur Maurice was free, he would go away and you would never see him again. What would you do then?"

"I—should be very sorry," I faltered; "but" . . . . .

"But what?"

"I would rather he went away, and was happy."

The King stooped down and kissed me on the brow.

"That, my little Mädchen, is the answer of a true friend," he said, gravely and kindly. "If your Monsieur Maurice deserves to go free, he shall have his liberty. You have our royal word for it. Colonel Bernhard, we will investigate this matter without the delay of an hour."

Saying thus, he turned from me to my father, and, followed by his officers, passed on in the direction of the Château.

I stood there speechless, his gracious words yet ringing in my ears. He had

left me no time for thanks, if even I could have framed any. But he had kissed me—he had promised me that Monsieur Maurice should go free, “if he deserved it!” and who better than I knew how impossible it was that he should not deserve it? It was all true. It was not a dream. I had the King’s royal word for it.

I had the King’s royal word for it—and yet I could hardly believe it!

## CHAPTER XII.

I HAVE told my story up to this point from my own personal experience, relating in their order, quite simply and faithfully, the things I myself heard and saw. I can do this, however, no longer. Respecting those matters that happened when I was not present, I can only repeat what was told me by others; and as regards certain foregone events in the life of Monsieur Maurice, I have but vague rumour, and still more vague conjecture upon which to base my conclusions.

The King had said that Monsieur Maurice's case should be investigated without the delay of an hour, and, so far as it

could then and there be done, it was investigated immediately on his return to the Château. He first examined Baron von Bulow's original despatch, and all my father's minutes of matters relating to the prisoner, including a statement written immediately after the departure of a stranger calling himself the Count von Rettel, and detailing from memory, very circumstantially and fully, the substance of a certain conversation to which I had been accidentally a witness, and which I have myself recorded elsewhere.

The King, on reading this statement, was observed to be greatly disturbed. He questioned my father minutely as to the age, complexion, height, and general appearance of the said Count von Rettel, and with his own hand noted down my father's replies on the back of my father's manuscript. This done, His Majesty desired that the man Hartmann should be brought before him.

But Hartmann was nowhere to be

found. His room was empty. His bed had not been slept in. He had disappeared, in short, as completely as if he had never dwelt within the precincts of the Château.

It was found, on more particular inquiry being made, that he had not been seen since the previous evening. Overwhelmed with terror, and perhaps with remorse, he had rushed out of Monsieur Maurice's presence, never to return. It was supposed that he had then immediately gathered together all that belonged to him, and had taken advantage of the bustle and confusion consequent on the King's arrival, to leave Brühl in one of the return carriages or fourgons that had brought the royal party from Cologne. I am not aware that anything more was ever seen or heard of him; or that any active search for him was judicially instituted either then, or at any other time. But he might easily have been pursued, and taken, and dealt with according to

the law, without our being any the wiser at Brühl.

Hartmann being gone, the King then sent for the prisoner, and Monsieur Maurice, for the first time in many weeks, left his own rooms, and was brought round to the state-apartments. Seeing so many persons about; seeing also the flowers and flags upon the walls, he seemed surprised, but said nothing. Being brought into the royal presence, however, he appeared at once to recognise the King. He bowed profoundly, and a faint flush was seen to come into his face. He then cast a rapid glance round the room, as if to see who else was present; bowed also (but less profoundly) to my father, who was standing behind the King's chair; and waited to be spoken to.

“ Vous êtes Français, Monsieur ? ” said the King, addressing him in French, of which language my father understood only a few words.

“ Je suis Français, votre Majesté, ” replied Monsieur Maurice.

“Comment!” said the King, still in French. “Our person, then, is not unknown to you?”

“I have repeatedly enjoyed the honour of being in your Majesty’s presence,” replied Monsieur Maurice, respectfully.

Being then asked where, and on what occasion, my father understood him to say that he had seen his Majesty at Erfurt during the great meeting of the Sovereigns under Napoleon the First, and again at the Congress of Vienna; and also that he had, at that time, occupied some important office, such, perhaps, as military secretary, about the person of the Emperor. The King then proceeded to question him on matters relating to his imprisonment and his previous history, to all of which Monsieur Maurice seemed to reply at some length, and with great earnestness of manner. Of these explanations, however, my father’s imperfect knowledge of the language enabled him to catch only a few words here and there.

Presently, in the midst of a somewhat lengthy statement, Monsieur Maurice pronounced the name of Baron von Bulow. Hereupon the King checked him by a gesture; desired all present to withdraw; caused the door to be closed; and carried on the rest of the examination in private. By and by, after the lapse of nearly three quarters of an hour, my father was recalled, and an officer in waiting was despatched to Monsieur Maurice's rooms to fetch what was left of the bottle of Seltzer water, which Monsieur Maurice had himself locked up in the sideboard the night before.

The King then asked if there was any scientific man in Brühl capable of analysing the liquid; to which my father replied that no such person could be found nearer than Cologne or Bonn. Hereupon a dog was brought in from the stables, and, having been made to swallow about a quarter of a pint of the Seltzer water, was

presently taken with convulsions, and died on the spot.

The King then desired that the body of the dog, and all that yet remained in the bottle should be despatched to the Professor of Chemistry at Bonn, for immediate examination.

This done, he turned to Monsieur Maurice, and said in German, so that all present might hear and understand :—

“ Monsieur, so far as we have the present means of judging, you have suffered an illegal and unjust imprisonment, and a base attempt has been made upon your life. You appear to be the victim of a foul conspiracy, and it will be our first care to sift that conspiracy to the bottom. In the meanwhile, we restore your liberty, requiring only your *parole d'honneur*, as a gentleman, a soldier, and a Frenchman, to present yourself at Berlin, if summoned, at any time required within the next three months.”

Monsieur Maurice bowed, laid his hand upon his heart, and said :—

“ I promise it, your Majesty, on my word of honour as a gentleman, a soldier, and a Frenchman.”

“ You are probably in need of present funds,” the King then said ; “ and if so, our Secretary shall make you out an order on the Treasury for five hundred thalers.”

“ Believing myself to be beggared of all I once possessed, I gratefully accept your Majesty’s bounty,” replied Monsieur Maurice.

The King then held out his hand for Monsieur Maurice to kiss, which he did on bended knee, and so went out from the royal presence, a free man.

Half an hour later, he and I were strolling hand in hand under the trees. His step was slow, and the hand that held mine had grown sadly thin and transparent.

“ Let us sit here awhile, and rest,” he said, as we came to the bench by the fountain.

I reminded him that we had sat and rested in the same spot the very last time we walked together.

"Ay," he replied, with a sigh. "I was stronger then."

"You will get strong again, now that you are free," I said.

"Perhaps—if liberty, like most earthly blessings, has not come too late."

"Too late for what?"

"For enjoyment—for use—for everything. My friends believe me dead; my place in the life of the world is filled up; my very name is by this time forgotten. I am as one shipwrecked on the great ocean, and cast upon a foreign shore."

"Are you—are you going away soon?" I said, almost in a whisper.

"Yes," he said, "I go to-morrow."

"And you will—never—come back again?" I faltered.

"Heaven forbid!" he said quickly. Then, remembering how that answer would grieve me, he added; "but I will

never forget thee, petite. Never, while I live."

"But—but if I never see you any more" . . . .

Monsieur Maurice drew my head to his shoulder, and kissed my wet eyes.

"Tush! that cannot, shall not be," he said, caressingly. "Some day, perhaps, I may win back that old home by the sea of which I have so often told thee, little one; and then thou shalt come and visit me."

"Shall I?" I said, wistfully. "Shall I indeed?"

And he said—"Ay, indeed."

But I felt, somehow, that it would never come to pass.

After this, we got up and walked on again, very silently; he thinking of the new life before him; I, of the sorrow of parting. By-and-by, a sudden recollection flashed upon me.

"But, Monsieur Maurice," I exclaimed, "who was the brown man that stood be-

hind your chair last night, and what has become of him ?”

Monsieur Maurice turned his face away.

“My dear little Gretchen,” he said, hastily, “there was no brown man. He existed in your imagination only.”

“But I saw him !”

“You fancied you saw him. The room was dark. You were half asleep in the easy chair—half asleep, and half dreaming.”

“But Hartmann saw him !”

“A wicked man fears his own shadow,” said Monsieur Maurice, gravely. “Hartmann saw nothing but the reflection of his crime upon the mirror of his conscience.”

I was silenced, but not convinced. Some minutes later, having thought it over, I returned to the charge.

“But, Monsieur Maurice,” I said, “it is not the first time he has been here.”

“Who ? The King ?”

“No—the brown man.”

Monsieur Maurice frowned.

"Nay, nay," he said, impatiently, "prithee, no more of the brown man. 'Tis a folly, and I dislike it."

"But he was here in the park the night you tried to run away," I said, persistently. "He saved your life by knocking up the musket that was pointed at your head!"

Pale as he always was, Monsieur Maurice turned paler still at these words of mine. His very lips whitened.

"What is that you say?" he asked, stopping short and laying his hand upon my shoulder.

And then I repeated, word for word, all that I had heard the soldiers saying that night under the corridor window. When I had done, he took off his hat and stood for a moment as if in prayer, silent and bareheaded.

"If it be so," he said presently, "if such fidelity can indeed survive the grave—then not once, but thrice . . . Who knows? Who can tell?"

He was speaking to himself. I heard the words, and I remembered them ; but I did not understand them till long after.

The King left Brühl that same afternoon *en route* for Ehrenbreitstein, and Monsieur Maurice went away the next morning in a post-chaise and pair, bound for Paris. He gave me, for a farewell gift, his precious microscope and all his boxes of slides, and he parted from me with many kisses ; but there was a smile on his face as he got into the carriage, and something of triumph in the very wave of his hand as he drove away.

Alas ! how could it be otherwise ? A prisoner freed, an exile returning to his country, how should he not be glad to go, even though one little heart should be left to ache or break in the land of the stranger ?

I never saw him again ; never—never—never. He wrote now and then to my father, but only for a time ; perhaps as many as six letters during three or four years—and

then we heard from him no more. To these letters he gave us no opportunity of replying, for they contained no address; and although we had reason to believe that he was a man of family and title, he never signed himself by any other name than that by which we had known him.

We did hear, however, (I forget now through what channel) of the sudden disgrace and banishment of His Majesty's Minister of War, the Baron von Bulow. Respecting the causes of his fall there were many vague and contradictory rumours. He had starved to death a prisoner of war and forced his widow into a marriage with himself. He had sold State secrets to the French. He had been over to Elba in disguise, and had there held treasonable intercourse with the exiled Emperor, before his return to France in 1818. He had attempted to murder, or caused to be murdered, the witnesses of his treachery. He had forged the King's signature. He

had tampered with the King's servants. He had been guilty, in short, of every crime, social and political, that could be laid to the charge of a fallen favourite.

Knowing what we knew, it was not difficult to disentangle a thread of truth here and there, or to detect under the most extravagant of these fictions, a substratum of fact. Among other significant circumstances, my father, chancing one day to see a portrait of the late minister in a shop-window at Cologne, discovered that his former visitor, the Count von Rettel, and the Baron von Bulow were one and the same person. He then understood why the King had questioned him so minutely with regard to this man's appearance, and shuddered to think how deadly that enmity must have been which could bring him in person upon so infamous an errand.

And here all ended. The guilty and the innocent vanished alike from the scene, and we at least, in our remote

home on the Rhenish border, heard of them no more.

Monsieur Maurice never knew that I had been in any way instrumental in bringing his case before the King. He took his freedom as the fulfilment of a right, and dreamed not that his little Gretchen had pleaded for him. But that he should know it, mattered not at all. He had his liberty, and was not that enough?

Enough for me, for I loved him. Ay, child as I was, I loved him; loved him deeply and passionately—to my cost—to my loss—to my sorrow. An old, old wound; but I shall carry the scar to my grave!

And the brown man?

Hush! a strange feeling of awe and wonder creeps upon me to this day, when I remember those bright eyes glowing through the dusk, and the swift hand that seized the poisoned draught and dashed it on the ground.

What of that faithful Ali, who went forward to meet the danger alone, and was snatched away to die horribly in the jungle? I can but repeat his master's words. I can but ask myself "Does such fidelity indeed survive the grave? Who knows? Who can tell?"



**VENDETTA.**



# V E N D E T T A .

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## CHAPTER I.

**Y**ES—I have seen some strange sights and come across some strange characters in my time. A man can scarcely lead such a wandering life as I have led for these last fifteen years, without acquiring a more extended view of human nature than if he had all the time been sitting by his own fireside and cultivating his paternal acres. The ups and downs of fortune, the ins and outs of character, are brought more forcibly before him. He sees life in extremes. Its dark side shows more darkly, its bright

side more brightly, than to those who survey it from the dead-level of every-day experience. He is brought face to face with want, with crime, with temptation. He learns how hard it is to be honest. He becomes familiar with many kinds of peril. He sees his fellow-men, in short, as the pedestrian sees the country through which he travels—from the ruggedest path, but the most picturesque point of view.

I come of a respectable West of England family, and my name is Matthew Skey. At the time of which I am about to tell you, I was holding a somewhat anomalous employment in the service of one Charles Davila, the proprietor of a well-known travelling circus and menagerie. I can scarcely say what office I filled in the Davila establishment, or rather what office I did not fill, for my duties were as various as the resources of the company. I organized the travelling arrangements; drew up the programmes; attended to the advertising department;

designed the costumes; wrote comic interludes for the circus; was equally ready to take a part in the performance or a violin in the orchestra; and could even do a little scene-painting upon occasion. For what profession I was originally destined, and what were the circumstances of my connection with Davila's company, are matters altogether apart from the present narrative. I am not about to discuss the faults and follies of my youth; but to relate, as nearly as I can remember them, certain events which took place towards the close of my engagement, just eleven years ago.

Charles Davila—or, as he called himself in the bills, Signor Carlo Davila—was of foreign extraction. I believe that Davila was his real name. His parents, at all events, were Corsican; but he was born at Dover, and was as thoroughly English in speech, habits, and bringing up as any one of his *troupe*. At the time of which I speak, he was about fifty-four

or five years of age—a short, powerfully-built, sallow, dark-haired, dark-eyed man, surly and domineering towards all over whom his authority extended, and, though a liberal paymaster, by no means popular among the members of his company. A solvent exchequer, however, covers a multitude of offences, and Davila's insolence was, fortunately for us, the insolence of prosperity. He possessed what has been happily defined as the genius of success; and, to support it, that rarest of all qualifications in a strolling manager—some few thousands of capital. These he had obtained with his second wife, a poor, meek, frightened creature, whom he ruled like a despot, and who trembled at the sound of his footfall. The one only thing that he loved was his child by the first marriage. To her, even when in his roughest moods, he could deny nothing. To her, he never spoke an angry word. All that she said, all that she wished, was right. And she loved him back again as

well as she could love anything, but in a heavy, passive way; for her mind was clouded, and at eight years of age, she spoke and acted with less intelligence than a child of four.

The Davila company, in my time, was the largest company upon the road. We travelled with seven van-loads of beasts, twenty trained horses, a performing elephant, a portable stage and circus, and a train of riders, athletes, musicians, and supernumeraries, numbering, to the best of my recollection, over forty persons. Sometimes, as for instance at country fairs, we broke up into three divisions, and by presenting three separate entertainments, a circus, a theatre, and a wild beast show, swept off all the business of the place. But we frequented large towns for the most part, where we occasionally settled down for a month at a time. On coming to any fresh place, we made our entry in grand procession, mounted and costumed, the vans dressed with streamers, the elephant caparisoned,

the band playing before us. On these occasions, the Davila family used to appear in Greek dresses, as Mars, Venus, and Cupid, grouped in a fancy chariot drawn by four cream-coloured horses. This always produced a great effect.

Davila acted as our circus-master. He had been a famous rider in his younger days, but having broken his leg by falling through a stage-trap, had now for several years been obliged to give up all but the quietest riding. A better trainer, however, never lived, nor a better manager. He worked hard, too,—harder in his way, perhaps, than any of us. He kept the keys of the stables, of the wardrobe, of the vans. He saw the horses fed three times a day. He had them led out before him, one by one, every morning before breakfast. He went round the stables, looked to the menagerie, and examined the padlocks on the cages, once, if not twice, in the course of each night. He fed the wild beasts with his own hands.

He kept the accounts. He paid the salaries. He superintended the rehearsals. In short, he was a man of indomitable industry; successful, because he neglected none of the conditions of success, and thoroughly upright in all his dealings.

I had been connected with the company close upon two years when we received what was called in the bills "an important accession of strength," in the person of Herr Jungla, the Lion King, with his five magnificent beasts. We were staying, I remember, at Chichester, and preparing to move on to Brighton. We had seen Jungla's posters everywhere along the road for weeks past. He had preceded us at Southampton, at Gosport, and at Portsmouth. We had overtaken him at Chichester, and he, like ourselves, was bound for Brighton. Our own strength was such that, in the ordinary way, a coincidence of this kind would have made no impression upon us. But the Lion King was really an attraction, and

by the time we overtook him in Chichester we had begun to find that he was rivalling us in a way that already told upon the treasury.

But Davila was, as I have already said, a first-rate man of business. He knew when to be cautious, and he also knew when to be bold. This time it was his policy to be bold. Without hinting at his intention, he went straight to Herr Jungla's quarters, and offered him a starring engagement for six months. Whatever were the terms—and they must have been considerable—the Lion King accepted them, and both he and his beasts appeared next day in our programme.

He was a superb man—nearly six feet two in height, muscular as a pugilist, lithe as a tiger, bronzed as a Zouave, and so strong that he could bend a horseshoe by the pressure of his thumb and fore-finger. As for his eyes, I never saw any so black, so bright, so penetrating. They seemed to strike fire when he frowned.

In these eyes lay the secret of his power. With one intense, unwavering glance, he held the fiercest beasts in check. They obeyed it. They trembled at it. They crouched before it. Trusting to this power alone, and armed only with a tiny dog-whip, he would venture into a cage full of lions; lie down in the midst of them; caress them; rebuke them; grasp their mighty jaws with both hands, and show their teeth to the audience; take her pups from the lioness, and carry them about the theatre in his arms—do everything, in short, that Van Amburgh himself had done, except put his head into the lion's mouth. Upon that feat he would never venture. When tired of life, he said, in his reckless way, he should prefer to blow his brains out rather than serve them up as sauce to be eaten with his own head.

“Besides,” he would add, “a lion has no delicate discrimination in these matters. Any fool's brains would seem to him to have as fine a flavour—why, then, should

I throw mine away upon a fellow who would not even do justice to the dish ?”

Who he was, whence he came, what was his real name, were questions that he would not have answered had any amongst us been bold enough to ask him. That he was a gentleman we never doubted for an instant. He spoke five European languages with the facility of a native, and was familiar with Arabic and Hindostanee. He could toss a half-crown in the air and pierce it with a pistol-bullet as it came down. He would ride at anything we pleased to put before him, and took the leaping-bar at a higher level than Davila himself. From the way in which he sat his horse, swung himself in and out of the saddle, handled a sabre, and drilled our riders on one occasion in a cavalry charge, we made certain that he had, at some time or other, seen military service. But this was conjecture only, for of his early life he never spoke ; and those who at first were rash enough to seek to know

more than he chose to tell, took good care never to repeat the liberty.

As for travelling, he seemed to have been everywhere and seen everything. All kinds of sport were familiar to him. He had shot bears in Russia, lions at the Cape, gorillas on the Gaboon, tigers in Bengal, wolves in Canada, buffaloes in the far West, jaguars on the Amazon, tapirs in Brazil, and kangaroos in Australia. The lions which he exhibited were of his own capture and training. He had taken them as pups, and sometimes, when it was his humour to talk, would tell of the difficulties and dangers he had to encounter before he could secure and keep alive as many as were necessary for the carrying out of his project. He had now five full-grown beasts, two lionesses and three lions, besides a couple of pups about three months old; and he ruled them absolutely. They both loved and feared him. With a word he could bring them fawning to his feet, or send them cowering to the farthest

corner of the cage. I well remember the first time I saw him go in amongst them—the light step with which he entered; the snap of the spring when the door closed behind him; the resolute look in his face; the careless confidence with which he called them about him, giving each brute his name, passing his hand caressingly over their heads, dealing a smart lash to one that presumed to growl because the master waked him, and then lying down in the midst of them, with his head on the shoulder of one, and his arm round the huge neck of another.

It was a grand sight; and though I saw it daily after that, and sometimes twice a day, I never learned to look upon it with indifference.

Haughty and exclusive as he was, holding himself as much aloof from the manager as from the rest of the *troupe*, there were still two persons for whom the lion king came by-and-by to lay aside somewhat of his reserve, and those two were Davila's

little girl and myself. I was not particularly flattered by the preference, for I did not believe that he liked me any better than he liked Davila, or St. Aubyn, or Montanari, or any others of the men. He simply found that I was better educated, and was glad to have some one at hand with whom he could now and then converse on equal terms. Of poor little Lotta (the child's name was Carlotta, but every one called her Lotta) he became, however, curiously fond. He took a strange, compassionate interest in the working of that torpid brain. He would talk down to her level, try to rouse her curiosity, watch the slow changes of expression in her pale little face, and listen to her imperfect utterances with a gentleness that seemed quite touching in a man of his impatient temper. He used to take her into the fields and teach her the names of trees and flowers; and into the menagerie, where he amused her with stories of bears, wolves, and monkeys. These walks and

stories were, in fact, lessons—the only lessons her mind was capable of receiving, and by-and-by the child began to brighten.

Men like Jungla are apt to deny the softer side of their better selves, and to be ashamed of their humanity; so when the child was named, he used to speak of her as of a curious psychological problem, and put his interest in her to the account of scientific curiosity. But this was mere sham. He was a lonely reckless man, without, apparently, a single near or natural tie in the wide world, and his heart warmed to the poor little, half-dumb, melancholy child. The truth was he loved her dearly—the more dearly the more she owed to him—and was ashamed of his weakness.

In the meanwhile the Lion King was an immense success. As I have already said, we were a prosperous company; but he more than doubled our prosperity. At Brighton, at Ramsgate, at Margate, we drew overwhelming audiences. We turned away money night after night; we raised

the prices of our stalls from three shillings to five, and had them filled with all the best people of each place at which we stayed. It was, in short, the Golden Age come back.

At length, when Jungla's engagement had run to about half its term, Davila called a meeting of five or six of the leading members of the company, and announced that he had made arrangements for a provincial tour on an extended scale, in the course of which we were to put up only at important places, such as Oxford, Bath, Bristol, Exeter, and so forth. We were staying at Rochester at the time, and the meeting was held at the manager's lodgings.

"It is my intention," he said, standing with his back to the empty fireplace, and speaking in his short, decisive way, "to place this company on a higher footing. The menagerie will in future form a separate exhibition, and be shown only by day, whilst our evening performances, will

assume a more dramatic character than any we have yet been in the habit of attempting. Mr. Skey will write us a new romantic, equestrian drama, which shall include all our principal attractions. Upon the getting up of this piece I mean to spare no expense. I have already seen a design for a new portable stage and proscenium on a large scale, and I am negotiating for the services of a professed scene-painter. A liberal stock of new dresses and appointments of every description will also be provided. I intend to raise the price of admission throughout the house, keeping the stalls at five shillings; and if our success equals my expectations I shall raise the salaries of the entire establishment. I hope, gentlemen, you like my programme?"

"It sounds well enough," said Jungla, sitting carelessly on the corner of the table, and twisting a paper cigarette; "but what about the new and original romantic drama? Do you propose to bring

in your obedient servant and the lions?"

"Of course. Mr. Skey will construct his piece expressly for your performance. That is understood, Mr. Skey?"

I nodded gloomily.

"And my feats on the bare-backed Arab?" said St. Aubyn, who was our principal rider. "It's of no use to give me a mere stage-part: my strong point's the circus. If I haven't some acts of horsemanship, I'd rather be left out of the piece altogether."

"Confound it, Sir! you needn't begin to make difficulties," replied Davila, sharply. "Mr. Skey understands that our scenes of the circus must form a prominent feature in the piece."

"Mine, of course, will be comic business," said Montanari, the Grimaldi of the company. "I have only one stipulation to make, and that is that I shall sing 'Hot Codlins.'"

"Good heavens, Mr. Montanari!" I exclaimed, "do you suppose I am going to

write a pantomime? Who ever heard of 'Hot Codlins' in a romantic drama?"

"Pantomime or no pantomime, it brings me a double encore every time I sing it," said Montanari, sullenly; "and you know the value of that as well as I do."

"Mr. Montanari is right," interposed Davila. "We could not spare the double encore. You must put it in somehow, Mr. Skey."

"And then there's the elephant, you know," suggested De Clifford, another member of the company.

"Oh, the elephant appears of course. You will be sure to bring in the elephant, Mr. Skey.

I snatched up my hat in desperation.

"You must give me an hour or two to think it over," I said. "I will take a turn in the fields, and meet you by-and-by at rehearsal."

With this I ran downstairs, along the principal street, over the bridge, and into the meadows on the opposite side of the

river. This field-path, with the hop-grounds on one hand, and the river and town on the other, had been my favourite walk ever since our coming to Rochester, and here I now strolled backwards and forwards, considering the difficulties of my task. The more I thought of them, however, the more hopeless they seemed.

I was required to construct a new, original, and romantic drama. That meant the orthodox thing—hero, heroine, heavy father, unscrupulous rival, terrific single combat, and triumph of virtue, according to immemorial precedent. But (and here my troubles began) into this drama I must contrive to bring Herr Jungla and his cageful of lions. They must even be necessary to the plot—actively instrumental in the defeat of the unscrupulous rival, and the ultimate triumph of virtue. And I must provide equestrian feats for the riders; and comic business (to say nothing of those objectionable “Hot Codlins”) for

the clown; and employment for the elephant. Was ever task so hopeless?

I sat down on a stile, buried my face in my hands, and tried to think. I called up all the stories I had read of lions, lion-hunts, and elephants. I conjured up distressed princesses and oriental despots by the score. Crusades and tournaments, Hannibal with his elephants crossing the Alps, Daniel in the Lion's Den, Saladin and Cœur de Lion, Androcles, Charlemagne, Tamerlane, The Cid, and a host of equally incongruous persons and events flitted before my mind's eye; but in vain. Puzzle over it as I might, I could hit on nothing practicable.

While I was yet brooding over my difficulties, a child and a dog came running towards me from the farther end of the meadow, followed by a man in a slouched hat who was sauntering along with a cigar in his mouth and his hands in his pockets. This trio proved to be Herr Jungla, his dog Schnapps, and the manager's little daughter Lotta.

"Eccolo!" he said, laughing. "I guessed we should find you here. What! still incubating heroics? Take a cigar: the Muses love tobacco."

"The Muses be hanged!" I replied, savagely. "I have been racking my brains here for the last hour, and cannot pump up an idea."

"Why not dip into your neighbour's well? There are the perennial springs of the Hippodrome and the Porte Saint Martin, to say nothing of the Cirque."

"No good. Where should I find anything into which I could foist lions, horses, 'Hot Codlins,' and an elephant? The thing is hopeless."

He laughed again; flung himself at full length on the grass; and, taking his cigar from his lips, said:—

"Look here, Skey. What would you say if I had an idea at your service?"

"You?"

"A magnificent idea, classical, scenical, historical, moral, instructive."

“I will immortalize you in my epic—when I write it!”

“Listen, then. And you, little Lotta, sit by me and listen too. Down, Schnapps! Down, old boy!”

The child slipped her little hand in his, and sat by with large, listening eyes; the dog lay with his nose upon his paws; and Jungla, leaning on his elbow, began:—

“Suppose then, Skey, that we lay our scene in Rome, Anno something or another, reign of Septimius Severus. Principal characters, Septimius and his wife, the Empress Julia; the Emperor’s two sons by the first wife, Caracalla and Geta; and his infant daughter by the second marriage. Whether he had an infant daughter or not is of no consequence. We invent her, and call her Livia. Also a celebrated Roman general, with a high-sounding name and a lovely daughter. We will call the lovely daughter, Irene. Lastly, we have the Prince of Cyprus, who is a Christian captive and our hero. I shall

play the Prince of Cyprus; so please to give me plenty of noble sentiments to bring down the gallery."

"But the plot——"

"Patience. Now for the plot. Open with Roman Forum—discontented citizens clamouring for *panem et circenses*—enter herald, proclaiming victory in Cyprus—exit citizens, rejoicing tumultuously. Scene second, Campus Martius. Emperor and Empress seated on lofty throne—Caracalla, Geta, and infant Lydia grouped around them—the lovely Irene standing at the foot of dais—background of admiring citizens—distant flourish of trumpets—victorious general approaching in triumph—lovely Irene apostrophises the gods—enter advanced guard on horseback—banners, band, Roman eagles—Christian captives, two and two—elephant laden with spoils—Prince of Cyprus, in chains—more guards—victorious general in car of triumph drawn by four cream-coloured horses—speech of Emperor—reply of ge-

neral—lovely Irene presents father with wreath of oak-leaves—burst of parental affection—Tableau. Gates of circus are now thrown open. General descends from chariot, and occupies chair of state—lovely Irene sits at his feet. And now, you observe, we bring in all our circus-work in honour of the general; and St. Aubyn has his bare-backed Arab, and Miss De Robinson her hoop and ribbon acts, and all the rest of it.”

“Superb! The very thing I wanted!”

“Meanwhile, our Christian prince and lovely Irene fall in love at first sight—expressive pantomime—rage and mortification of Caracalla, who is himself desperately smitten with Irene—Emperor, at close of games, announces show of beasts and gladiators in amphitheatre for following day—Caracalla, kneeling, requests that Prince of Cyprus may be given to the lions in celebration of victory and honour of the Gods—Emperor grants request—acclamations of multitude—Prince of Cyprus

makes heroic speech in blank verse—lovely Irene carried out in swoon—Tableau—end of Act first. Now comes Act second. Mamertine prison—Prince of Cyprus in chains—soliloquy in blank verse—door of cell opens—enter Irene—implores him to save his life by sacrificing to the gods—agonising scene—Love—Duty—Temptation—Religion and Honour triumphant—Irene converted—enter more Christian captives—grand chorus—end of Scene first. Scene second—the Amphitheatre. Emperor, Empress, Caracalla, Geta, infant Livia, victorious General, lovely Irene, and admiring populace, as before. Combats of gladiators, feats of skill and strength by the athletes of the company and so forth. Flourish of trumpets—scene opens at back and discloses cage of lions—Prince of Cyprus brought in chains—is offered his life if he will sacrifice to gods—refuses in blank verse—Emperor gives signal—guards advance—quick as thought, Prince of Cyprus breaks away—springs over barrier and up

steps of throne—snatches infant Livia from her mother's arms, leaps with her into the arena, and stands with her at the door of lion's cage. "Advance but a step," he cries, "and I fling the princess to the lions !" Universal consternation—agony of Empress Julia—Tableau."

"Glorious ! it will bring the house down."

"Ay, but the best is to come. What say you to his then and there suspending a cross round the neck of the royal infant ; calling upon all present to witness the power of the holy symbol ; walking straight into the cage with her in his arms, and standing unharmed in the midst of the lions ?"

"The infant Livia being represented by a doll, I suppose ?"

"Nothing of the kind ! The infant Livia being played by my little Lotta here, who is not a bit afraid of the lions, and will be as safe in my arms as in her own little bed."

The child looked up and smiled. She was ready to go with him at that very moment, if he so pleased. I wondered what Davila would say to this proposal, and a faint shadow of apprehension passed over me like a breath of cold wind.

Jungla went on.

“ The rest is soon sketched. Prince of Cyprus restores child, and goes through lion programme amid acclamations of multitude—Emperor grants his pardon and bids him ask a boon—demands hand of lovely Irene—Caracalla interposes—challenges him to single combat—grand sword fight—Prince of Cyprus victorious—spares Caracalla’s life when down, and gives him back his sword—Prince of Cyprus then flings himself at feet of lovely Irene—General joins their hands—flourish of trumpets—Tableau—curtain falls amid tempest of applause. Now, what of my plot? Will it do?”

“ Do? It is invaluable! How am I ever to thank you enough?”

•

“ By making a success with it, and writing me a capital part. By the way, we’ve not provided for ‘ Hot Codlins.’ ”

“ We cannot : it would ruin the play.”

“ No, no. Montanari must have his double encore. The Emperor’s jester can sing it, and we’ll put a foot note to the bills, stating that the song is of Thracian origin, and was introduced into Rome with the Dionysiac festival. This will give it an air of classic respectability. And now Lotta and I will continue our walk. Hie on, old Schnapps ! Fare thee well, son of the Muses ! ”

And with this, the Lion King sprang to his feet, lit a fresh cigar, and left me to jot down the heads of that highly-successful new and original romantic equestrian drama, which shortly afterwards came out under the imposing title of “ Ariobarzanes, Prince of Cyprus, and the fair Irene ; or the Last Days of the Empire of the West, and the Royal Lion Tamer of the Flavian Amphitheatre.”

## CHAPTER II.

THE new piece took immensely. We brought it out first of all at Reading, where we ran it for thirty nights without change of programme; and thence carried it through all the principal towns of the Western and Midland counties. Crowded audiences and a well-stocked exchequer accompanied each step of our progress. Jungla's engagement was renewed for another six months. The salaries of the entire establishment were raised, according to the manager's promise; whilst I, as author of the piece, received a gratification over and above my increase of weekly pay, in the shape of a

cheque for ten guineas. In short, we were enjoying a run of unexampled success, and Davila was at the height of his prosperity.

Yet, strangely enough, he seemed none the happier for it. His temper on the contrary became gloomier as his prospects brightened. Month after month went by; the tide of success flowed on unchecked; and still he who profited most grew daily more solitary and morose. He looked like a man weighed down with secret care. The lines about his mouth grew fixed and rigid, his eyes restless, his gait slouching. He had never been a sociable man, but till now he had never been a misanthrope. That he should turn back in the streets at sight of an acquaintance—answer at random when spoken to—now suffer the merest trifle to provoke him to storms of rage, now permit acts of the grossest negligence to pass unrebuked, were traits of character which showed themselves for the first time.

Knowing him to be a sullen-tempered man, we scarcely observed the change till it had become habitual. Once awake, however, to the fact, we talked of nothing else.

What was it? Why was it? Had he lost money in private speculations? Had he done anything in which he feared to be discovered? Was his mind giving way, and were these the first symptoms of insanity? We might well be anxious—we might well discuss the subject; for on Davila's sagacity and energy the fortunes of the whole company depended.

I have already said that my duties were of the most heterogeneous kind, and included all those which are understood to devolve upon an acting manager. As acting manager, therefore, I was brought into almost daily contact with Davila and his family. Let him shun others as he would, he was obliged to see me. Had he not done so, we must ere long have come to a stand-still, for I could do no-

thing without his sanction. If, therefore, he avoided the theatre, unwelcome as I knew myself to be, I was forced to seek him at his lodgings.

At these times he would sit with his face turned from me, scarcely listening to what I had to say; replying in monosyllables; often not replying at all; and sometimes, for no apparent cause, breaking into sudden fits of savage impatience. His wife seemed more afraid of him than ever. Even the child's presence irritated him. There were times when he seemed as if he could not bear the sight of her; when a stranger might almost have believed that he hated her. Knowing how the man used to idolize his little Lotta, this change struck me as the most ominous of all.

"It would be a satisfaction to know what is the matter with Davila," said Jungla, meeting me one morning on my way to the manager's lodgings. "He looks at me as if he would like to grind my bones to make his bread."

"He looks at every one in the same way," I replied.

"I think not. I believe he honours me with a special and peculiar aversion. You should have seen the expression of his face last Saturday, when I went up to the treasury."

"General ill-will, believe me. I am going to him now with yesterday's accounts, and he will treat me as if I were his worst enemy. There is little Lotta—you would fancy he abhorred her."

The Lion King pulled vaguely at his moustache, and looked thoughtful.

"If anything goes wrong with Davila," he said, presently—"I mean, if he goes mad, or more likely still, commits suicide, what will become of that child? Mrs. Davila's not her mother, and, so far as I can see, cares little enough about her."

"He has money," I suggested.

"Who knows? It may be all muddled away in some limited or unlimited swindle.

Then there is the wife to provide for ; and the money, after all, was hers. By Jove ! I think I should have to take little Lotta myself."

Then seeing me repress a smile, he added, quickly :—

"Not but what that would be an intolerable bore, you know. Altogether out of my line. More in my way to adopt lions than children."

With this he nodded, and left me. In another moment I was at the door of Davila's lodgings. We were staying at Leeds at the time, and the manager was in occupation of a first and second floor over a shop in the market-place. I ran up-stairs and found him at the window, with his back towards the door by which I entered.

"Well," he said, without looking round, "what is it?"

"Yesterday's accounts, Mr. Davila," I replied, "if you have leisure to go through them."

He muttered something inaudible, but neither turned nor stirred.

"Mr. Flack of Nottingham has written," I said, arranging my papers on the table. "He wants to know when we are likely to be in that neighbourhood. Their great annual cattle-fair comes off in about six weeks, and he thinks, if you could arrange to be there about that time . . ."

"I won't pledge myself," interrupted Davila, impatiently.

"Shall I say that we will write again in a week or two?"

"I don't know. I can't tell."

"By the way, Herr Jungla's engagement will expire in a little more than a fortnight."

He made a sudden movement, but said nothing. Having paused a moment for his reply, I went on.

"Do you wish me to say anything about it?"

"About what?"

"About the renewal of his engagement."

He turned at last, his face ablaze with anger.

“No,” he said, savagely; “not a word.”

“Oh, very well,” I replied; “I had far rather you did it yourself. I was only afraid you did not know how time was going.”

“I am not going to do it myself,” he said, with an oath. “I don’t choose to renew the engagement. Herr Jungla may go.”

“Herr Jungla may go?” I repeated. “Impossible!”

“Why impossible?”

“Because he is our greatest attraction; —because we could not carry on the piece without him. Why, it’s not many weeks since you entirely renewed all the dresses and decorations.”

“For all that,” he said, dropping into a chair and drumming angrily upon the table with his knuckles, “Herr Jungla may go, and you may tell him so.”

“I should be sorry to give that message,”

I said, "till you have thought it over."

He laughed discordantly.

Just at that moment I heard the child's voice on the stairs, not prattling joyously as happy children prattle, but timidly, as fearing rebuke or question. Then, as she came nearer, it sank to a whisper and the little feet went stealing softly across the landing. I glanced from the door to the manager's face. I could not have told why I looked at him. The impulse was involuntary. But what a face it was! The angry flush was gone, and a dead, dull pallor had come there in its place. His eyes were fixed upon the carpet; his lips pressed hard together; his brows knitted. He said nothing. He listened; and as the child crept by, I saw one large vein rise and throb upon his temple like an angry pulse. There was no passion in the face to make it terrible; nothing but an ominous, intense suppression of emotion. What was the nature of that emotion? A dim half-intelligible sus-

picion flashed upon me. I remembered what Jungla had been saying as we came through the town. I could not have helped speaking, had it been to save my life.

“Your little girl has improved very much of late,” I said. “I was quite surprised yesterday to find her reading one of the stories in ‘Sandford and Merton.’ She scarcely knew her letters six months ago.”

He looked up confusedly, as hearing, but not taking in the sense of my words.

“Were it only on her account,” I continued, “you would scarcely wish, I should think, to lose Herr Jungla. It would break her little heart to be parted from him.”

He sprang to his feet like a madman; broke into a storm of incoherent curses; swore that Jungla should go, though it were to ruin him ten times over; then, exhausted by the force of his own fury, dropped back into his chair, laid his head

down upon the table, and sobbed like a child.

“ I’d give all I have,” he cried, “ never to have seen his face ! We were happy enough once. I didn’t want her to be clever ; she was clever enough for me. I only wanted her to love me. And she did love me—I was all the world to her !”

I was deeply affected. I saw it all now, and I pitied him from the bottom of my heart. The man’s whole being was rooted in the child, and he was enduring torments of jealousy. I tried to comfort him ; but he would not be comforted.

“ No, no !” he said ; “ it is of no use. I know better. He has robbed me of my child. Oh, curse him ! I hate him !—I hate him !”

I went from the house that morning more troubled than I would have cared to confess. What should I say to Jungla ? That Davila did actually hate him I could no longer doubt. I felt that it was no mere figure of speech. He hated him

with a Corsican's hatred—with a hatred that was eating away his own heart—that might end in madness—that must lead to ruin. I made no further effort to get Jungla's engagement renewed. I had an instinctive feeling that the sooner all business relations were over between them, the better for both. I knew, of course, that we could ill afford to lose the Lion King and his lions, or to withdraw "The Prince of Cyprus" from our bills. But I also knew that the present state of things could not long go on except at the cost of absolute destruction, and that to bring Davila back to his former self was, at this moment, the one object of paramount importance. Acting, therefore, upon this unwelcome conviction, I gave Jungla to understand that he would be free at the expiration of his term to make whatever arrangements or engagements he pleased.

To say that he was not taken by surprise would be untrue. He knew his own value, and could pretty well estimate

what Davila's loss would be on "The Prince of Cyprus" alone. He smiled, however, shrugged his shoulders, and took it coolly enough.

"As Mr. Davila pleases," he said. "I told you that he honoured me with a special aversion, and here is proof positive of the same. Well, *chacun à son goût*. I rejoice to find that our friend can afford to indulge his little prejudices after so expensive a fashion."

This was all the comment he made. He expressed no regret, betrayed no annoyance, said not one word of little Lotta. But I observed after this that he seemed as if he could scarcely let her out of his sight for ten minutes together.

At length, some three or four days having gone by, he announced his intention of running over to Glasgow to make arrangements for the hire of the theatre in Dunlop Street, where he purposed giving a series of performances on his own responsibility. Now the journey from

Leeds to Glasgow occupies rather more than eight hours each way, and we were playing the "Prince of Cyprus" every night, except on Saturdays, when we gave a morning performance instead. Moreover, as all who have sojourned in North Britain know but too well, there is no midday travelling on Scottish lines on Sundays. So Jungla's only course was to start from Leeds immediately after the morning performance on Saturday, arriving in Glasgow between eleven and twelve at night; spending his Sunday in Glasgow; leaving again for Leeds at about a quarter to eleven on Monday morning, and just getting back in time to fling himself into a fly, drive at once to the theatre, and dress for the rising of the curtain at half-past seven.

"Look here, Skey," he said, half whimsically, half pathetically, "you'll have an eye to my young family now and then, while I'm away?"

"What—to the lions?"

"Yes, to the lions. Pratt is, of course, a thoroughly careful and trustworthy fellow; but I am a tender parent, you see, and it goes to my heart to leave the pretty dears to the care of a keeper."

I professed my readiness to do what I could, but reminded him that my acquaintance with the manners and customs of lions was of the most limited description.

"Tell me what you wish done," I said, "and I will do it. Am I to see them fed?"

"Oh no. Pratt knows all about that. Five o'clock is their hour, and he knows just what they ought to have. You might, perhaps, see that he is punctual. I like them to be fed punctually—it spoils their tempers to be kept waiting over time. He will be punctual to-day, for it is just four now, and he is not likely to forget them an hour hence; however, I really don't want you to do anything in particular, my dear fellow. All I ask is that

you will just let Pratt feel that somebody is looking after him. If you would kindly saunter in, you know, once or twice in the course of each day, and say something, if it's only about the weather—you understand what I mean."

"Perfectly. I will do my best, depend on it."

"A thousand thanks. I wouldn't trouble you, only that it's a long time to be away—over fifty hours, you see. I never have left them for quite so long before. Good-bye—so much obliged—will do the same for you another day."

This conversation took place on the Saturday afternoon, at the door of Jungla's dressing-room, as he was preparing to be gone by the 4.15 express, immediately after the performance. The stage was not yet cleared. The lights were not yet all extinguished. The last fiddler was still putting up his music in the orchestra.

"Good-bye," I said, as he snatched

up his bag and ran towards the door.  
“*Bon voyage.*”

At that moment a wail of childish sorrow rang through the house, and little Lotta, still in her stage finery, darted after him, calling piteously upon his name.

“Oh, take me with you!” she cried.  
“Don’t—don’t—don’t go away! Oh, please take me with you!”

“My pet, don’t cry,” said Jungla. He had turned back at the first sound of her voice, and had now taken her in his arms, and was kissing her tenderly.  
“Don’t cry, my little maiden. I am coming back the day after to-morrow.”

“No—no—no! You are never coming back! They told me you were never coming back! Oh, why do you go away? What shall I do? Why don’t you take me too?”

“My darling—my little pet,” said Jungla. “I *am* coming back—ask Mr. Skey. Say something to comfort her, Skey, when I’m gone. God bless you, my

pretty one. I wish I could take you—I wish it with all my heart.”

Saying this, he kissed her again, put her gently down, and ran away at full speed.

I tried to say something. I told her he was certainly coming back on Monday, and would play with her as usual in “The Prince of Cyprus” on Monday night; for Lotta did perform the infant Livia, and was carried into the lions’ den by Jungla every evening to thunders of applause.

“Is it quite certain?” she asked, looking up doubtfully.

I assured her it was quite certain.

“And then will he never go away any more?”

At this question I hesitated.

“Do you love him so dearly that you would like him to stay with you always?” I asked, evasively.

The child’s face glowed through her tears.

“I love him better than all the world beside,” she replied, eagerly.

What was it that I heard as she said this? It sounded like a groan. Was it one of the scene-shifters at work in the flies?

“Lotta! Lotta!” cried Mrs. Davila from her dressing-room at the other side of the stage. “Aren’t you coming to be undressed to-night?”

I took the child’s hand and led her back whence she had come. As I did so, I saw a man leaning up against the wall in a dark corner close behind where we had been standing. His face was buried in his hands; but I recognised him at a glance. It was Davila.

The next morning before I had breakfasted, I went round, as I had promised, to see the lions. There were three cages of them—the lioness and cubs in one, and a lion and lioness in each of the others. They were kept in the same enclosure with Davila’s menagerie, but divided from the other beasts by a slight partition. I found Jungla’s keeper, Mr. Pratt, smoking

his matutinal pipe outside in the sun, and the lions lying and walking about, as usual, in their cages. Having looked in, there was nothing for me to do but to exchange a civil word with Mr. Pratt and retire; which I did. It was Sunday. I had my day before me; no rehearsal to superintend, no accounts to make up, no managerial interview to go through. I went home to breakfast; after breakfast I went to church; after church put some biscuits in my pocket, and went for a long walk into the country. When I came back it was just four o'clock, and I dropped in again at the menagerie on my way home. This time I found Mr. Pratt asleep on a bench close against the door. He sat up at the sound of my footsteps, and was wide awake directly.

"Lions all right, Pratt?" said I, peeping in and seeing them walking about as before.

"Yes, Sir; of course they're all right, Sir," he replied, somewhat sulkily.

"Getting hungry, I suppose, Pratt. Near dinner-time, isn't it? You feed them at five, don't you?"

Mr. Pratt, evidently displeased by my interference, nodded, and stared up at the ceiling. At that moment one of the lions set up a tremendous roar and I retreated precipitately, feeling that I had done my duty by Jungla's little family for that day.

The next morning, not without some misgivings as to my reception, I went round again. Mr. Pratt, cleaning a row of Jungla's boots in the passage outside, looked more hostile than ever. I wished him good morning as I passed, but the beasts inside were roaring so furiously that I could not hear my own voice. I went in. The lioness and cubs were comfortably asleep; but the others were lashing their tails, pacing to and fro in their cages, rearing themselves up on their hind legs, tearing at the bars with their tremendous paws as if they would wrench

them down, and breaking out every two or three moments into such prolonged and deafening roars that the floor vibrated again beneath my feet. Nor was this all. The beasts in Davila's menagerie, divided off by only a slight partition, seemed as if lashed to frenzy by the noise their neighbours were making. The monkeys were chattering, the bears growling, the cockatoos shrieking, the hyenas yelling. The hubbub, in short, was so appalling that I remained scarcely a moment inside the doors, but, beckoning to Mr. Pratt to follow me, went out into the little yard beyond.

I should observe, by the way, that we were in occupation of a temporary building which had been erected a few months before for the accommodation of botanic fêtes, agricultural shows, and so forth; and which, enclosing as it did a spacious area, platform, and out-buildings, had been easily converted into a first-rate theatre and circus. The menagerie, which now

formed a separate exhibition, occupied one of the out-buildings at the back, and was approached by a separate entrance. This out-building, however, communicated with the circus by means of a covered passage, along which Jungla's cages were wheeled every night into the arena.

"One would think the beasts were mad!" I exclaimed. "Do they often make such a terrific row, Pratt?"

The keeper shook his head.

"I can't think what's come to them," he said, "unless it is that they miss the master. I never knew 'em so noisy before."

"If they go on like this to-night," said I, "the audience won't hear a word of the play."

Mr. Pratt scratched his ear, but made no reply.

It's enough to make the horses quite unmanageable," I added, with a glance towards the stables. "Well, good morning, Pratt. I'll look in again, by-and-by."

"Beg pardon, Sir," said the keeper, surlily; "but there's one thing I should wish to say before you go. I don't like the way I'm being treated, Sir. Mr. Jungla knows me. He knows whether he can trust me. He knows whether I'm used to beasts, or whether I'm not used to beasts. I don't like being overlooked, Sir. I don't like seeing my work taken out of my hands. I should be glad to know whether Mr. Jungla holds me responsible for these beasts, or not?"

"If you mean that my dropping in now and then has annoyed you, my good fellow," I replied, "I can only say that, to my certain knowledge, Mr. Jungla places the highest confidence . . ."

"No, Sir," he interrupted, "I don't mean you. I mean Mr. Davila."

"Mr. Davila?" I repeated.

"Yes, Sir. What call has he, or any one, to interfere with my duties? If Mr. Jungla couldn't trust the feeding of his beasts, or the keeping of the keys to me,

I think he might have told me so before he left."

"The feeding of the beasts, and the keeping of the keys!" I echoed again. "Do you mean to say that Mr. Davila . . ."

"Mr. Davila came to feed and see after his own beasts, Sir, on Saturday afternoon, and again yesterday afternoon, after you had been round for the second time; and he claimed the keys of my cages. He said he was answerable for the safety of those lions while Mr. Jungla was away, and that nobody should feed them but himself. He as good as ordered me out of the place. You may be sure I didn't wait to be ordered a second time."

"You left him here? You gave up the keys?"

"Mr. Davila said he was master here, Sir, and that I could not deny. He said he was my master's master, and I couldn't deny that either. Same time, begging your pardon again, Sir, it's treatment I've not been used to; and I wished to say

that the next time Mr. Davila, or any one else, comes here interfering with my duties, I shall walk out of that door and go home. If Mr. Jungla wants me back again, he can fetch me."

I knew not what to say. I could hardly tell what I feared; but I had a sort of vague suspicion that the manager might be capable of doing Jungla an ill turn if the opportunity came in his way. What if he were to poison the lions? Acting upon this thought, I went back and had another look at them. They were roaring and pacing about as before.

"There's nothing the matter with them, I suppose, Pratt?" I said anxiously. "They wouldn't be so lively if—if they were not well?"

"Well? Bless you, Sir, they're well enough. They'd be drooping and neglecting their food, if they were ill. I don't know what quantity they got either Saturday or yesterday; but they had eaten it every bit when I came back—except a dry bone or

two. They're only excited by the howling of the hyenas. There's nothing the matter with them."

Satisfied that Pratt was right, but utterly puzzled by this sudden outbreak of activity on the part of the manager, I then went round to the theatrical department to attend to the thousand and one daily duties of my office. Here, to my surprise, I found Davila bustling to and fro, as prompt, as authoritative, as business-like as of old. He had just called a rehearsal of the riders—had ordered the stalls and orchestra to be swept out—was presently about to inspect the wardrobe—and when I first went in, was reprimanding the carpenters about the state of a practicable bridge in one of the set scenes. I could scarcely believe the evidence of my ears and eyes. He had suddenly thrown off all that apathy which was so alarming in him of late. There was even a feverish activity about him which made the contrast still more strik-

ing. His senses seemed over-alert, as it were. His eyes glittered with excitement. He talked fast and loudly. He went everywhere. He saw everthing. He was never still or silent for a moment. It was like a resurrection from the dead.

At two o'clock, the morning's work being done, we dispersed, actors, musicians, scene-shifters, ostlers, dressers, supernumeraries of all kinds, and went our several ways. I, for one, went home to dinner, thinking over the incidents of the morning. That Davila's conduct was very strange, not only in the matter of the lions, but in the manner of his return to business, was undeniable. I could not keep from pondering over it, more or less, all that afternoon. Look upon it from what side I might, there was still something odd, and not altogether pleasant, about it.

Towards six I went round, as usual, to his lodgings. I always went to him about an hour before the doors opened, to know

whether he had any special instructions respecting the evening's performance. This afternoon, for almost the first time in my remembrance, he was not at home. As I came back, however, about halfway between the market-place and the theatre, I came upon him, face to face. He looked flushed, and I saw at a glance that he had been drinking.

"You are looking for me, Mr. Skey," he said hurriedly. "I have nothing fresh to say to you. I am going home. I don't feel well; the day's work has been too much for me. Programme, of course, remains unaltered:—the scenes of the circus first; then Herr Jungla's performance with the lions; then the comic ballet to end Part First. For Part Second, 'The Prince of Cyprus,' as usual. There is no fear, I suppose, of his missing the train?"

"None whatever, I should think," I replied. "He told me he should leave Glasgow by the 10.30 train, which

reaches Leeds at 6.15. It is a tolerably punctual train, too, I believe; generally in to time, and never later than the half-hour."

But before I had finished speaking, the manager had nodded and passed on.

I hurried to the theatre, expecting to find Jungla there before me. He had not yet arrived. I looked at my watch. It wanted only twenty minutes to seven. The train was surely in by now; but he was probably walking from the station, and the station was a good three-quarters of a mile distant. I then went round the house to see that all was in order, the check-taker at his post, the musicians in their places, the horses and riders ready for their entry. When I came back to the green-room the clock was just on the stroke of seven, and Herr Jungla had not yet come.

I became seriously uneasy. I delayed the opening of the doors till nearly five minutes past seven. We were then

obliged to admit the audience. Ten minutes past seven—a quarter past—twenty minutes past—and still he did not come. At half-past we were bound to begin. I could now no longer doubt that he had missed the train. I sent for a Bradshaw, and found there was no other train in from Glasgow before ten minutes past eleven.

I asked myself despairingly what was to be done? In an emergency of this kind everything devolved upon me; but how to meet the present difficulty I knew not. For the first part of the programme it was not of so much importance: we could substitute some circus-business for Jungla's first appearance. He simply entered the cage, called the beasts up one by one, according to their names; held their jaws open; lay down amongst them, and so forth. It lasted but five minutes at any time, and, to my thinking, somewhat impaired the effect of the lion scene in "The Prince of Cyprus."

But what could I substitute for the second part of the programme? No one could play Ariobarzanes—no one could deal with the lions—save Jungla himself. In the midst of my distress, just as the overture was winding up to the last crash and the riders were ranging themselves for their grand entry, a telegram was put into my hand, containing the following words :—

“Railway bridge fallen in between Bradford and Apperley. Trains all obliged to stop at Bradford. Thirteen miles by fly. Will be with you in time for drama.”

This message put an end to my anxieties. I went before the curtain with the telegram in my hand, explained the case to the audience, begged permission to substitute Signor Montanari's unrivalled feats of strength for Herr Jungla's first performance, and retired with two rounds of applause.

All went off well. The Lion King arrived at the stage-door just as the curtain fell at

the close of Part the First, and was dressed and chatting with me at the wings long before it was time for him to go on as chief captive in the Triumph.

“Had a successful journey?” I asked.

“Thoroughly successful. I have taken the Glasgow house for a fortnight certain, with liberty to hold it for a month on the same terms; and I have made arrangements with a really good troupe of Christy’s Minstrels to eke out the entertainment. My lions and I, you see, are hardly enough by ourselves. How is my little family, by the way? All right?”

“All right, and distressingly lively when I saw them last—roaring like volcanoes.”

“Pretty dears! and that best of men, Pratt?”

“The best of men is by no means in the best of tempers,” I replied, laughing. “But stay—you are called. I will tell you more about it by-and-by.”

From this moment, however, Jungla was incessantly before the audience, and I had

no opportunity of speaking to him again. During the five minutes, or less than five minutes' interval between the acts, he ran down to see the cage wheeled up from the menagerie, and was only back in time for the prison scene at the rising of the drop. Coming off from this scene, however, he passed me at the wings.

"Look here, Skey," he said, hurriedly, "I wish you get me a glass of wine. I'm confoundedly tired, and—and, somehow, I don't altogether like the look of the lions."

"Not like the look of the lions!" I exclaimed. "What do you mean?"

"I scarcely know myself. I can't think what the devil is the matter with them. I miss the recognition in their eyes, and—and, after all, I don't believe, with beasts of that sort, that the personal influence should be relaxed for even a single day."

"But so tame as yours are . . ." I began. He interrupted me impatiently.

"No wild beast is ever really tamed,"

he said. "But for heaven's sake let us waste no words. Get me a glass of wine—or, better still, a glass of brandy."

I ran round myself to the refreshment room and brought him a quarter of a pint of brandy in a tumbler. The amphitheatre scene was already on when I came back; the gladiators were combating in the arena; Mr. and Mrs. O'Leary, as the Emperor and Empress, were seated on a throne to the right of the stage, while little Lotta, dressed in pink and silver as the infant Livia, was standing at the Empress's knee. Jungla was just about to go on when I put the tumbler into his hand. He emptied it to the last drop. At that moment the trumpets were sounded; the back of the scene was thrown open; the cage, propelled from behind, was pushed into the middle of the stage; and Jungla, as the Prince of Cyprus, was led to the foot of the throne.

At sight of the lions, the house broke into three rounds of vociferous applause.

I expected to hear the beasts return the compliment with one of their terrific choruses; but they contented themselves with a long, low, continuous growl, which sounded, somehow, still more deadly, and came in with extraordinary effect.

And now began the great scene of the play. It would scarcely become me to praise the dialogue; but I think no one who had seen the piece as we performed it that season, and had heard the interruptions of applause which were certain to break out each night at particular points of the speeches, could have pronounced it other than a thoroughly legitimate success.

The captive prince being led in, the Emperor rose and bade him choose his fate. He must either sacrifice to the Gods, or be given to the lions. Ariobarzanes, in sixteen lines of rhymed verse, rejects the alternative with scorn and declares himself ready to die for the true faith.

The Emperor expostulates ; but in vain.  
He then gives the fatal signal, addressing  
the prince in these lines :—

“ Die, then, rash scion of a royal line !  
I mourn thy choice. ’Tis thy decree—not mine.”

The guards then advance—Ariobarzanes  
springs upon the steps of the throne,  
seizes the imperial infant in his arms,  
leaps into the arena, and stands at the  
door of the lion’s cage, with his hand  
upon the bolt. The nobles in waiting  
draw their swords ; the Empress swoons ;  
the guards are about to rush to the  
rescue.

“ Hold !” cries Jungla, in a voice of  
thunder :—

“ Hurl but one jav’lin, let one arrow fly,  
And by the God I worship, she shall die.”

Then taking from his own neck a large  
cross suspended to a chain, he passes it  
over the child’s head, and adds :—

"Yet stay, idolators! see where I place  
This sacred symbol of eternal grace.  
Thus arm'd, thus safe, thus shielded, now behold  
I draw the bolt. . . ."

He was interrupted by an awful cry—a cry of such intense, quivering agony as perhaps no ear in all that theatre had ever heard before—a cry like nothing human! At the same instant a man rushed past me where I was standing at the wings, and fell as he reached the stage.

"Stop!" he shrieked. "For God's sake, stop! My child—the lions! the lions!"

To place little Lotta in the arms of a bystander—to seize the fallen man by the collar and drag him up by main force, like a dog—was for Jungla the work of a moment.

"What of the lions?" he shouted.  
"What of the lions?"

"Is she safe?" cried Davila, wildly.  
"Oh, mercy! is she safe? *They've not been fed for three days!*"

A deadly look came into Jungla's face. He took his enemy by the throat, lifted him fairly off his feet, and made as if he would have hurled him over into the circus below. For one moment, he held him so—for one moment I thought we should have seen murder done before our eyes. Then the dangerous light went out of his face. He smiled bitterly; dropped the manager, a dead weight, at his feet; and spurning him contemptuously with his foot, said:—

“So, my friend, you calculated that I should have walked into that cage alone, an hour ago! I give you credit for your ingenuity. 'Sdeath! I half suspected foul play of some sort.”

\* \* \* \*

My story, in so far as it may be called a story, is told. If you object that it points no particular moral, and comes to no particular end, I am bound to admit that it does neither; but then you will please to remember that I have been

drawing upon my experience instead of upon my imagination, and that facts do not often round themselves off so neatly and conclusively as fictions. Poetic justice probably requires that Davila's infernal plot should either have recoiled upon his own head, or have been followed by some signal retribution; but when last I heard of the man he was conducting a monster circus through the American States, and, if report spoke truly, prospering beyond all precedent. These incidents, however, which I have just related, were indirectly the cause of the breaking up of the old Davila company. Herr Jungla, it is true, forbore to prosecute; but the story was all over the country in less than a week, and articles headed, "Murderous Attempt on the part of a Provincial Manager," "A Modern Corsican Vendetta," and the like, figured conspicuously in every local newspaper throughout the kingdom. As for the company, it fell apart like an unbound sheaf. Montanari and St. Aubyn gave

notice to quit in the course of the following week. The O'Learys left in about a fortnight. All who could obtain engagements elsewhere shook the dust of Davila's circus from their feet, and made haste to be gone. For myself, I stood not upon the order of going, but gave in my accounts the very next day, and went immediately. Even in this there may, however, have been some flavour of retribution; for Davila held his head high, and valued reputation. It must have been bitter work for him to find himself shunned as if he were plague-stricken.

From Leeds I went with Herr Jungla to Glasgow, and thence, after a few weeks, accompanied him to Edinburgh. I liked the man, and, having no engagement, found it pleasant to travel with him. In Edinburgh we parted, and from that day to this I have never seen him or his lions again. I would give much to know who he was, whence he came, and what has become of him. Vague rumours

that he had been seen with Garibaldi in Sicily, and in Secessia with Stonewall Jackson, have now and then reached my ears ; but they came in such a questionable form that I have not ventured to place much reliance upon them. I have a presentiment, however, that we shall some day meet again.

**AN ENGINEER'S STORY.**



## AN ENGINEER'S STORY.

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### CHAPTER I.

**H**IS name was Matthew Price ; mine is Benjamin Hardy. We were born within a few days of each other ; bred up in the same village ; taught at the same school. I cannot remember the time when we were not close friends. Even as boys, we never knew what it was to quarrel. We had not a thought, we had not a possession, that was not in common. We would have stood by each other fearlessly, to the death. It was such a friendship as

one reads about sometimes in books—fast and firm as the great Tors upon our native moorlands, true as the sun in the heavens.

The name of our village was Chadleigh. Lifted high above the pasture-flats which stretched away at our feet like a measureless green lake and melted into mist on the farthest horizon, it nestled, a tiny stone-built hamlet, in a sheltered hollow about midway between the plain and the plateau.

Above us, rising ridge beyond ridge, slope beyond slope, spread the mountainous moor-country, bare and bleak for the most part, with here and there a patch of cultivated field or hardy plantation, and crowned highest of all with masses of huge grey crag, abrupt, isolated, hoary, and older than the deluge. These were the Tors—Druids' Tor, King's Tor, Castle Tor, and the like; sacred places, as I have heard, in the ancient time, where crownings,

burnings, human sacrifices, and all kinds of bloody heathen rites were performed.

Bones, too, had been found there, and arrow-heads, and ornaments of gold and glass. I had a vague awe of the Tors in those boyish days, and would not have gone near them after dark for the heaviest bribe.

I have said that we were born in the same village. He was the son of a small farmer, named William Price, and the eldest of a family of seven; I was the only child of Ephraim Hardy, the Chadleigh blacksmith—a well-known man in those parts, whose memory is not forgotten to this day.

Just so far as a farmer is supposed to be a bigger man than a blacksmith, Mat's father might be said to have a better standing than mine; but William Price, with his small holding and his seven boys, was, in fact, as poor as many a day-labourer; whilst the blacksmith,

well-to-do, bustling, popular, and open-handed, was a person of some importance in the place.

All this, however, had nothing to do with Mat and myself. It never occurred to either of us that his jacket was out at elbows, or that our mutual funds came altogether from my pocket. It was enough for us that we sat on the same school-bench, conned our tasks from the same primer, fought each other's battles, screened each other's faults, fished, nuttered, played truant, robbed orchards and birds' nests together, and spent every half-hour, authorised or stolen, in each other's society.

It was a happy time; but it could not go on for ever. My father, being prosperous, resolved to put me forward in the world. I must know more and do better than himself. The forge was not good enough, the little world of Chadleigh not wide enough, for me. Thus it happened that I was still

swinging the satchel when Mat was whistling at the plough, and that at last, when my future course was shaped out, we were separated, as it then seemed to us, for life.

For, blacksmith's son as I was, furnace and forge, in some form or other, pleased me best. I chose to be a working engineer. So my father by-and-by apprenticed me to a Birmingham iron-master; and, having bidden farewell to Mat, and Chadleigh, and the grey old Tors in the shadow of which I had spent all the days of my life, I turned my face northward, and went over into "the Black Country."

I am not going to dwell on this part of my story. How I worked out the term of my apprenticeship; how, when I had served my full time and become a skilled workman, I took Mat from the plough and brought him over to the Black Country, sharing with him lodging, wages, experience—all, in

short, that I had to give; how he, naturally quick to learn and brimful of quiet energy, worked his way up a step at a time, and came by-and-by to be a "first hand" in his own department; how, during all these years of change, and trial, and effort, the old boyish affection never wavered or weakened, but went on growing with our growth and strengthening with our strength—are facts which I need do no more than outline in this place.

About this time—it will be remembered that I speak of the days when Mat and I were on the bright side of thirty—it happened that our firm contracted to supply six first-class locomotives to run on the new line, then in progress of construction, between Turin and Genoa. It was the first Italian order we had taken.

We had had dealings with France, Holland, Belgium, Germany; but never with Italy. The connexion, therefore, was

new and valuable—all the more valuable because our Transalpine neighbours had but lately begun to lay down the iron roads, and would be safe to need more of our good English work as they went on. So the Birmingham firm set themselves to the contract with a will, lengthened our working hours, increased our wages, took on fresh hands, and determined, if energy and promptitude could do it, to place themselves at the head of the Italian labour-market, and stay there. They deserved and achieved success.

The six locomotives were not only turned out to time, but were shipped, despatched, and delivered with a promptitude that fairly amazed our Piedmontese consignee. I was not a little proud, you may be sure, when I found myself appointed to superintend the transport of the engines. Being allowed a couple of assistants, I contrived that Mat should be one of them; and thus we enjoyed

together the first great holiday of our lives.

It was a wonderful change for two Birmingham operatives fresh from the Black Country. Genoa, that fairy city, with its crescent background of Alps; the port crowded with strange shipping; the marvellous blue sky and bluer sea; the painted houses on the quays; the quaint cathedral faced with black and white marble; the street of jewellers, like an Arabian Nights' bazaar; the street of palaces with its Moorish court-yards, its fountains and orange-trees; the women veiled like brides; the galley-slaves chained two and two; the processions of priests and friars; the everlasting clangour of bells; the babble of a strange tongue; the singular lightness and brightness of the climate—made, altogether, such a combination of wonders that we wandered about the first day in a kind of bewildered dream, like children at a fair. Before that week was ended, being

tempted by the beauty of the place and the liberality of the pay, we had agreed to take service with the Turin and Genoa Railway Company, and to turn our backs upon Birmingham for ever.

Then began a new life—a life so active and healthy, so steeped in fresh air and sunshine, that we sometimes marvelled how we could have endured the gloom of the Black Country. We were constantly up and down the line—now at Genoa, now at Turin, taking trial trips with the locomotives, and placing our old experience at the service of our new employers.

In the meanwhile we made Genoa our head-quarters, and hired a couple of rooms over a small shop in a by-street sloping down to the quays. Such a busy little street—so steep and winding that no vehicles could pass through it, and so narrow that the sky looked like a mere strip of deep blue ribbon overhead! Every house in it, however, was a shop

where the goods encroached on the foot-way, or were piled about the door, or hung like tapestry from the balconies; and all day long, from dawn to dusk, an incessant stream of passers-by poured up and down between the port and the upper quarter of the city.

Our landlady was the widow of a silver-worker, and lived by the sale of filigree ornaments, cheap jewellery, combs, fans, and toys in ivory and jet. She had an only daughter, named Gianetta, who served in the shop and was simply the most beautiful woman I ever beheld. Looking back across this weary chasm of years, and bringing her image before me (as I can and do) with all the vividness of life, I am unable, even now, to detect a flaw in her beauty. I do not attempt to describe her. I do not believe there is a poet living who could find the words to do it; but I once saw a picture that was somewhat like her (not half so lovely, but still like her), and, for aught

I know, that picture is still hanging where I last looked at it—upon the walls of the Louvre.

It represented a woman with brown eyes and golden hair, looking over her shoulder into a circular mirror held by a bearded man in the background. In this man, as I then understood, the artist had painted his own portrait; in her, the portrait of the woman he loved. No picture that I ever saw was half so beautiful, and yet it was not worthy to be named in the same breath with Gianetta Coneglia.

You may be certain the widow's shop did not want for customers. All Genoa knew how fair a face was to be seen behind that dingy little counter; and Gianetta, flirt as she was, had more lovers than she cared to remember, even by name. Gentle and simple, rich and poor, from the red-capped sailor buying his earrings or his amulet, to the nobleman carelessly purchasing half the fili-

grees in the window, she treated them all alike—encouraged them, laughed at them, led them on and turned them off at her pleasure. She had no more heart than a marble statue; as Mat and I discovered by-and-by, to our bitter cost.

I cannot tell to this day how it came about, or what first led me to suspect how things were going with us both; but long before the waning of that Autumn a coldness had sprung up between my friend and myself. It was nothing that could have been put into words. It was nothing that either of us could have explained or justified, to save his life. We lodged together, ate together, worked together, exactly as before; we even took our long evening's walk together, when the day's labour was ended; and except, perhaps, that we were more silent than of old, no mere looker-on could have detected a shadow of change. Yet there it was, silent and subtle, widening the gulf between us every day.

It was not his fault. He was too true and gentle-hearted to have willingly brought about such a state of things between us. Neither do I believe—fiery as my nature is—that it was mine. It was all hers—hers from first to last—the sin, and the shame, and the sorrow.

If she had shown a fair and open preference for either of us, no real harm could have come of it. I would have put any constraint upon myself, and, Heaven knows! have borne any suffering, to see Mat really happy. I know that he would have done the same, and more if he could, for me. But Gianetta cared not one bajocco for either. She never meant to choose between us.

It gratified her vanity to divide us; it amused her to play with us. It would pass my power to tell how, by a thousand imperceptible shades of coquetry—by the lingering of a glance, the substitution of a word, the flitting of

a smile — she contrived to turn our heads, and torture our hearts, and lead us on to love her. She deceived us both. She buoyed us both up with hope; she maddened us with jealousy; she crushed us with despair. For my part, when I seemed now and then to wake to a sudden sense of the ruin that was about our path, and saw how the truest friendship that ever bound two lives together was drifting on to wreck and ruin, I asked myself whether any woman in the world was worth what Mat had been to me and I to him. But this was not often. I was readier to shut my eyes upon the truth than to face it; and so lived on, wilfully, in a dream.

Thus the Autumn passed away, and Winter came—the strange, treacherous Genoese Winter, green with olive and ilex, brilliant with sunshine, and bitter with storm. Still, rivals at heart and friends on the surface, Mat and I lingered on in our lodging in the Vicolo Balba.

Still Gianetta held us with her fatal wiles and her still more fatal beauty. At length there came a day when I felt I could bear the horrible misery and suspense of it no longer. The sun, I vowed, should not go down before I knew my sentence. She must choose between us. She must either take me or let me go. I was reckless. I was desperate. I was determined to know the worst or the best. If the worst, I would at once turn my back upon Genoa, upon her, upon all the pursuits and purposes of my past life, and begin the world anew. This I told her, passionately and sternly, standing before her in the little parlour at the back of the shop, one bleak December morning.

“ If it's Mat whom you care for most,” I said, “ tell me so in one word, and I will never trouble you again. He is better worth your love. I am jealous and exacting ; he is as trusting and unselfish as a woman. Speak, Gianetta ; am I to bid

you good-bye for ever and ever, or am I to write home to my mother in England, bidding her pray to God to bless the woman who has promised to be my wife?"

"You plead your friend's cause well," she replied haughtily. "Matteo ought to be grateful. This is more than he ever did for you."

"Give me an answer, for pity's sake," I exclaimed, "and let me go!"

"You are free to go or stay, Signor Inglese," she replied, "I am not your gaoler."

"Do you bid me leave you?"

"Beata Madre! not I."

"Will you marry me, if I stay?"

She laughed aloud—such a merry, mocking, musical laugh, like a chime of silver bells!

"You ask too much," she said.

"Only what you have led me to hope these five or six months past."

"That is just what Matteo says. How tiresome you both are!"

"Oh, Gianetta," I said, passionately, "be serious for one moment! I am a rough fellow, it is true—not half good enough or clever enough for you; but I love you with my whole heart, and an Emperor could do no more."

"I am glad of it," she replied; "I do not want you to love me less."

"Then you cannot wish to make me wretched! Will you promise me?"

"I promise nothing," said she, with another burst of laughter; "except that I will not marry Matteo!"

Except that she would not marry Matteo! Only that. Not a word of hope for myself. Nothing but my friend's condemnation. I might get comfort, and selfish triumph, and some sort of base assurance out of that, if I could. And so, to my shame, I did. I grasped

at the vain encouragement, and, fool that I was ! let her put me off again unanswered. From that day I gave up all effort at self-control, and let myself drift blindly on—to destruction.

At length things became so bad between Mat and myself that it seemed as if an open rupture must be at hand. We avoided each other, scarcely exchanged a dozen sentences in a day, and fell away from all our old familiar habits. At this time—I shudder to remember it !—there were moments when I felt that I hated him.

Thus, with the trouble deepening and widening between us day by day, another month or five weeks went by, and February came ; and, with February, the Carnival. They said in Genoa that it was a particularly dull carnival ; and so it must have been, for, save a flag or two hung out in some of the principal streets, and a sort of festa look about the women, there were no special

indications of the season. It was, I think, the second day of the Carnival, when, having been on the line all the morning, I returned to Genoa at dusk, and to my surprise found Mat Price on the platform. He came up to me, and laid his hand on my arm.

"You are in late," he said. "I have been waiting for you three-quarters of an hour. Shall we dine together to-day?"

Impulsive as I am, this evidence of returning good-will at once called up my better feelings.

"With all my heart, Mat," I replied; "shall we go to Gozzoli's?"

"No, no," he said, hurriedly. "Some quieter place — some place where we can talk. I have something to say to you."

I noticed now that he looked pale and agitated, and an uneasy sense of apprehension stole upon me. We decided on the "Pescatore," a little out-

of-the-way trattoria, down near the Molo Vecchio. There, in a dingy salon frequented chiefly by seamen, and redolent of tobacco, we ordered our simple dinner. Mat scarcely swallowed a morsel, but, calling presently for a bottle of Sicilian wine, drank eagerly.

"Well, Mat," I said, as the last dish was placed on the table, "what news have you?"

"Bad."

"I guessed that from your face."

"Bad for you—bad for me. Gianetta..."

"What of Gianetta?"

He passed his hand nervously across his lips.

"Gianetta is false—worse than false," he said, in a hoarse voice. "She values an honest man's heart just as she values a flower for her hair—wears it for a day, then throws it aside for ever. She has cruelly wronged us both."

"In what way? Good Heavens, speak out!"

“In the worst way that a woman can wrong those who love her. She has sold herself to the Marchese Loredano.”

The blood rushed to my head and face in a burning torrent. I could scarcely see, and dared not trust myself to speak.

“I saw her going towards the cathedral,” he went on, hurriedly. “It was about three hours ago. I thought she might be going to confession, so I hung back and followed her at a distance. When she got inside, however, she went straight to the back of the pulpit, where this old man was waiting for her. You remember him—an old man who used to haunt the shop a month or two back. Well, seeing how deep in conversation they were, and how they stood close under the pulpit with their backs towards the church, I fell into a passion of anger and went straight up the aisle, intending to say or do something, I scarcely knew what; but, at all events, to draw her arm

through mine, and take her home. When I came within a few feet, however, and found only a big pillar between myself and them, I paused. They could not see me, nor I them; but I could hear their voices distinctly, and—and I listened.”

“Well, and you heard...”

“The terms of a shameful bargain—beauty on the one side, gold on the other; so many thousand francs a year; a villa near Naples—Pah! it makes me sick to repeat it.”

And with a shudder, he poured out another glass of wine and drank it at a draught.

“After that,” he said presently, “I made no effort to bring her away. The whole thing was so cold-blooded, so deliberate, so shameful, that I felt I had only to wipe her out of my memory, and leave her to her fate. I stole out of the cathedral, and walked about here by the sea for ever so long, trying to get my thoughts straight. Then I remembered

you, Ben; and the recollection of how this wanton had come between us and broken up our lives drove me wild. So I went up to the station and waited for you. I felt you ought to know it all; and—and I thought, perhaps, that we might go back to England together.”

“The Marchese Loredano!”

It was all that I could say; all that I could think. As Mat had just said of himself, I felt “like one stunned.”

“There is one other thing I may as well tell you,” he added, reluctantly, “if only to show you how false a woman can be. We—we were to have been married next month.”

“*We*? Who? What do you mean?”

“I mean that we were to have been married—Gianetta and I.”

A sudden storm of rage, of scorn, of incredulity swept over me at this, and seemed to carry my senses away.

“*You!*” I cried. “Gianetta marry *you*! I don’t believe it.”

“I wish I had not believed it,” he replied, looking up as if puzzled by my vehemence. “But she promised me; and I thought when she promised it she meant it.”

“She told me weeks ago that she would never be your wife!”

His colour rose; his brow darkened; but when his answer came, it was as calm as the last.

“Indeed!” he said. “Then it is only one baseness more. She told me that she had refused you; and that was why we kept our engagement secret.”

“Tell the truth, Mat Price,” I said, well-nigh beside myself with suspicion. “Confess that every word of this is false! Confess that Gianetta will not listen to you, and that you are afraid I may succeed where you have failed. As perhaps I shall—as perhaps I shall, after all!”

“Are you mad?” he exclaimed. “What do you mean?”

"That I believe it's just a trick to get me away to England—that I don't credit a syllable of your story. You're a liar, and I hate you!"

He rose, and laying one hand on the back of his chair, looked me sternly in the face.

"If you were not Benjamin Hardy," he said, deliberately, "I would thrash you within an inch of your life."

The words had no sooner passed his lips than I sprang at him. I have never been able distinctly to remember what followed. A curse—a blow—a struggle—a moment of blind fury—a cry—a confusion of tongues—a circle of strange faces. Then I see Mat lying back in the arms of a bystander; myself trembling and bewildered—the knife dropping from my grasp; blood upon the floor; blood upon my hands; blood upon his shirt. And then I hear those dreadful words:—

"Oh, Ben, you have murdered me!"

He did not die—at least, not there and then. He was carried to the nearest hospital, and lay for some weeks between life and death. His case, they said, was difficult and dangerous. The knife had gone in just below the collar-bone, and pierced down into the lungs.

He was not allowed to speak or turn—scarcely to breathe with freedom. He might not even lift his head to drink. I sat by him day and night all through that sorrowful time. I gave up my situation on the railway; I quitted my lodging in the Vicolo Balba; I tried to forget that such a woman as Gianetta Coneglia had ever drawn breath.

I lived only for Mat; and he tried to live, more I believe for my sake than his own. Thus, in the bitter silent hours of pain and penitence, when no hand but mine approached his lips or smoothed his pillow, the old friend-

ship came back with even more than its old trust and faithfulness. He forgave me fully and freely; and I would thankfully have given my life for him.

At length there came one bright Spring morning, when, dismissed as convalescent, he tottered out through the hospital gates, leaning on my arm and feeble as an infant. He was not cured; neither, as I then learned to my horror and anguish, was it possible that he ever could be cured.

He might, with care, live for some years; but the lungs were injured beyond hope of remedy, and a strong or healthy man he could never be again. These, spoken aside to me, were the parting words of the chief physician, who advised me to take him further south without delay.

I took him to a little coast-town called Rocca, some thirty miles beyond Genoa—a sheltered lonely place

along the Riviera, where the sea was even bluer than the sky, and the cliffs were green with strange tropical plants, cacti, and aloes, and Egyptian palms.

Here we lodged in the house of a small tradesman; and Mat, to use his own words, "set to work at getting well in good earnest." But, alas! it was a work which no earnestness could forward. Day after day he went down to the beach, and sat for hours drinking the sea-air and watching the sails that came and went in the offing. By-and-by he could go no further than the garden of the house in which we lived.

A little later, and he spent his days on a couch beside the open window, waiting patiently for the end. Ay, for the end! It had come to that. He was fading fast—waning with the waning Summer, and conscious that the Reaper was at hand. His whole aim now was to soften the agony of my remorse

and prepare me for what must shortly come.

"I would not live longer if I could," he said, lying on his couch one Summer evening and looking up to the stars. "If I had my choice at this moment, I would ask to go. I should like Gianetta to know that I forgave her."

"She shall know it," I said, trembling suddenly from head to foot.

He pressed my hand.

"And you'll write to father?"

"I will."

I had drawn a little back, that he might not see the tears raining down my cheeks; but he raised himself on his elbow, and looked round.

"Don't fret, Ben," he whispered; laid his head back wearily upon the pillow—and so died.

And this was the end of it. This was the end of all that made life life

to me. I buried him there, in hearing of the wash of a strange sea on a strange shore. I stayed by the grave till the priest and the bystanders were gone. I saw the earth filled in to the last sod, and the gravedigger stamp it down with his feet.

Then, and not till then, I felt that I had lost him for ever—the friend I had loved, and hated, and slain. Then, and not till then, I knew that all rest and joy, and hope were over for me. From that moment my heart hardened within me, and my life was filled with loathing. Day and night, land and sea, labour and rest, food and sleep, were alike hateful to me.

It was the curse of Cain, and that my brother had pardoned me made it lie none the lighter. Peace on earth was for me no more, and goodwill towards men was dead in my heart for ever. Remorse softens some natures; but it poisoned mine. I hated all man-

kind, but above all mankind I hated the woman who had come between us two, and ruined both our lives.

He had bidden me seek her out, and be the messenger of his forgiveness. I had sooner have gone down to the port of Genoa and taken upon me the serge cap and shotted chain of any galley-slave at his toil in the public works; but for all that I did my best to obey him. I went back, alone and on foot. I went back, intending to say to her, "Gianetta Coneglia, he forgave you—but God never will." But she was gone.

The little shop was let to a fresh occupant. The neighbours only knew that that mother and daughter had left the place quite suddenly, and that Gianetta was supposed to be under the "protection" of the Marchese Loredano. How I made inquiries here and there—how I heard they had gone to Naples—and how, being restless and reckless of my time, I worked my passage in a French

steamer, and followed her—how, having found the sumptuous villa that was now hers, I learned that she had left there some ten days and gone to Paris, where the Marchese was ambassador for the Two Sicilies—how, working my passage back again to Marseilles, and thence, in part by the river and in part by the rail, I made my way to Paris—how, day after day, I paced the streets and the parks, watched at the ambassador's gates, followed his carriage, and, at last, after weeks of waiting, discovered her address—how, having written to request an interview, her servants spurned me from her door and flung my letter in my face—how, looking up at her windows, I then, instead of forgiving, solemnly cursed her with the bitterest curses my tongue could devise—and how, this done, I shook the dust of Paris from my feet and became a wanderer upon the face of the earth, are facts which I have no space to tell.

The next six or eight years of my life were shifting and unsettled enough. A morose and restless man, I took employment here and there as opportunity offered, turning my hand to many things, and caring little what I earned, so long as the work was hard and the change incessant. First of all I engaged myself as chief engineer in one of the French steamers plying between Marseilles and Constantinople. At Constantinople I changed to one of the Austrian Lloyd's boats, and worked for some time to and from Alexandria, Jaffa, and those parts. After that, I fell in with a party of Mr. Layard's men at Cairo, and so went up the Nile and took a turn at the excavations of the mound of Nimroud.

Then I became a working engineer on the new desert line between Alexandria and Suez; and by-and-by I worked my passage out to Bombay, and took service as an engine-fitter on one of the great Indian railways. I stayed a long

time in India—that is to say, I stayed nearly two years, which was a long time for me; and I might not even have left so soon, but for the war that was declared just then with Russia. That tempted me. For I loved danger and hardship as other men love safety and ease; and as for my life, I had sooner have parted with it than kept it, any day. So I came straight back to England and betook myself to Portsmouth, where my testimonials at once procured me the sort of berth I wanted. I then went out to the Crimea in the engine-room of one of Her Majesty's war-steamers.

I served with the fleet, of course, while the war lasted; and when it was over, went wandering off again, rejoicing in my liberty. This time I went to Canada, and after working on a railway then in progress near the American frontier, I presently passed over into the States; journeyed from north to south; crossed the Rocky Mountains; tried a month or

two of life in the gold country ; and then, being seized with a sudden, aching, unaccountable longing to revisit that solitary grave so far away on the Italian coast, I turned my face once more towards Europe.

Poor little grave ! I found it rank with weeds, the cross half shattered, the inscription half effaced. It was as if no one had loved him or remembered him. I went back to the house in which we had lodged together. The same people were still living there, and made me kindly welcome. I stayed with them for some weeks. I weeded, and planted, and trimmed the grave with my own hands, and set up a fresh cross in pure white marble. It was the first season of rest that I had known since I laid him there ; and when at last I shouldered my knapsack and set forth again to battle with the world, I promised myself that, God willing, I would creep back to

Rocca when my days drew near to ending, and be buried by his side.

- From hence, being, perhaps, a little less inclined than formerly for very distant parts, and willing to keep within reach of that grave, I went no further than Mantua, where I engaged myself as an engine-driver on the line, then not long completed, between that city and Venice. Somehow, although I had been trained to the working engineering, I preferred in these days to earn my bread by driving. I liked the excitement of it, the sense of power, the rush of the air, the roar of the fire, the flitting of the landscape. Above all, I enjoyed to drive a night-express. The worse the weather, the better it suited with my sullen temper. For I was as hard, and harder than ever. The years had done nothing to soften me. They had only confirmed all that was blackest and bitterest in my heart.

I continued pretty faithful to the Mantua line, and had been working on it

steadily for more than seven months when that which I am now about to relate took place.

It was in the month of March. The weather had been unsettled for some days past, and the nights stormy; and at one point along the line, near Ponte di Brenta, the waters had risen and swept away some seventy yards of embankment. Since this accident, the trains had all been obliged to stop at a certain spot between Padua and Ponte di Brenta, and the passengers, with their luggage, had thence to be transported in all kinds of vehicles, by a circuitous country-road, to the nearest station on the other side of the gap, where another train and engine awaited them. This, of course, caused great confusion and annoyance, put all our timetables wrong, and subjected the public to a large amount of inconvenience.

In the meanwhile an army of navvies was drafted to the spot, and worked day and night to repair the damage. At this

time I was driving two through-trains each day; namely, one from Mantua to Venice in the early morning, and a return-train from Venice to Mantua in the afternoon—a tolerably full day's work, covering about one hundred and ninety miles of ground, and occupying between ten and eleven hours.

I was therefore not best pleased when, on the third or fourth day after the accident, I was informed that, in addition to my regular allowance of work, I should that evening be required to drive a special train to Venice. This special train, consisting of an engine, a single carriage, and a break-van, was to leave the Mantua platform at eleven; at Padua the passengers were to alight and find post-chaises waiting to convey them to Ponte di Brenta; at Ponte di Brenta another engine, carriage, and break-van were to be in readiness. I was charged to accompany them throughout.

“Corpo di Bacco,” said the clerk who

gave me my orders, "you need not look so black, man. You are certain of a handsome gratuity. Do you know who goes with you?"

"Not I."

"Not you, indeed! Why, it's the Duca Loredano, the Neapolitan ambassador."

"Loredano!" I stammered. "What Loredano? There was a Marchese..."

"Certo. He was the Marchese Loredano some years ago; but he has come into his dukedom since then."

"He must be a very old man by this time."

"Yes, he is old; but what of that? He is as hale, and bright, and stately as ever. You have seen him before?"

"Yes," I said, turning away; "I have seen him—years ago."

"You have heard of his marriage?"

I shook my head.

The clerk chuckled, rubbed his hands, and shrugged his shoulders.

"An extraordinary affair," he said. "Made a tremendous *esclandre* at the time. He married his mistress—quite a common, vulgar girl—a Genoese—very handsome; but not received of course. Nobody visits her."

"Married her!" I exclaimed. "Impossible."

"True, I assure you."

I put my hand to my head. I felt as if I had had a fall or a blow.

"Does she—does she go to-night?" I faltered.

"Oh dear, yes—goes everywhere with him—never lets him out of her sight. You'll see her—la bella Duchessa!"

With this my informant laughed and rubbed his hands again, and went back to his office.

The day went by, I scarcely know how, except that my whole soul was in a tumult of rage and bitterness. I returned from my afternoon's work about 7.25, and at 10.30 I was once again at

the station. I had examined the engine, given instructions to the Fochista, or stoker, about the fire, seen to the supply of oil and got all in readiness, when, just as I was about to compare my watch with the clock in the ticket-office, a hand was laid upon my arm, and a voice in my ear said :—

“Are you the engine-driver who is going on with this special train?”

I had never seen the speaker before. He was a small, dark man, muffled up about the throat, with blue glasses, a large black beard, and his hat drawn low upon his eyes.

“You are a poor man, I suppose,” he said, in a quick, eager whisper, “and, like other poor men, would not object to be better off. Would you like to earn a couple of thousand florins?”

“In what way?”

“Hush! You are to stop at Padua, are you not, and to go on again at Ponte di Brenta?”

I nodded.

"Suppose you did nothing of the kind. Suppose, instead of turning off the steam, you jump off the engine, and let the train run on?"

"Impossible. There are seventy yards of embankment gone, and . . . ."

"Basta! I know that. Save yourself, and let the train run on. It would be nothing but an accident."

I turned hot and cold; I trembled; my heart beat fast, and my breath failed.

"Why do you tempt me?" I faltered.

"For Italy's sake," he whispered; "for liberty's sake. I know you are no Italian; but for all that you may be a friend. This Loredano is one of his country's bitterest enemies. Stay, here are the two thousand florins."

I thrust his hand back fiercely.

"No—no," I said. "No blood-money. If I do it, I do it neither for Italy nor for money; but for vengeance."

"For vengeance!" he repeated.

At this moment the signal was given for backing up to the platform. I sprang to my place upon the engine without another word. When I again looked towards the spot where he had been standing, the stranger was gone.

I saw them take their places—Duke and Duchess, secretary and priest, valet and maid. I saw the station-master bow them into the carriage, and stand, bare-headed, beside the door. I could not distinguish their faces; the platform was too dusk, and the glare from the engine-fire too strong; but I recognised her stately figure, and the poise of her head. Had I not been told who she was, I should have known her by those traits alone. Then the guard's whistle shrilled out, and the station-master made his last bow; I turned the steam on, and we started.

My blood was on fire. I no longer trembled or hesitated. I felt as if every nerve was iron, and every pulse instinct

with deadly purpose. She was in my power, and I would be revenged. She should die—she for whom I had stained my soul with my friend's blood! She should die in the plenitude of her wealth and her beauty, and no power on earth should save her!

The stations flew past. I put on more steam; I bade the fireman heap in the coke, and stir the blazing mass. I would have outstripped the wind, had it been possible. Faster and faster—hedges and trees, bridges and stations, flashing past—villages no sooner seen than gone—telegraph wires twisting, and dipping, and twining themselves in one, with the awful swiftness of our pace! Faster and faster, till the fireman at my side looks white and scared, and refuses to add more fuel to the furnace! Faster and faster, till the wind rushes in our faces and drives the breath back upon our lips!

I would have scorned to save myself. I meant to die with the rest. Mad as I

was—and I believe from my soul that I was utterly mad for the time—I felt a passing pang of pity for the old man and his suite. I would have spared the poor fellow at my side, too, if I could; but the pace at which we were going made escape impossible.

Vicenza was passed—a mere confused vision of lights. Pojana flew by. At Padua, but nine miles distant, our passengers were to alight. I saw the fireman's face turned upon me in remonstrance; I saw his lips move, though I could not hear a word; I saw his expression change suddenly from remonstrance to a deadly terror; and then—merciful Heaven! then for the first time I saw that he and I were no longer alone upon the engine.

There was a third man—a third man standing on my right hand, as the fireman was standing on my left—a tall, stalwart man, with short curling hair, and a flat Scotch cap upon his head. As I

fell back in the first shock of surprise, he stepped forward, took my place at the engine, and turned the steam off. I opened my lips to speak to him. He turned his head slowly, and looked me in the face.

Matthew Price!

I uttered one long wild cry, flung my arms wildly up above my head, and fell as if I had been smitten with an axe.

I am prepared for the objections that may be made to my story. I expect, as a matter of course, to be told that this was an optical illusion; or that I was suffering from pressure on the brain; or even that I laboured under an attack of temporary insanity. I have heard all these arguments before, and, if I may be forgiven for saying so, I have no desire to hear them again. My own mind has been made up on the subject for many a year. All that I can say—all that I *know* is—

that Matthew Price came back from the dead to save my soul and the lives of those whom I, in my guilty rage, would have hurried to destruction. I believe this as I believe in the mercy of Heaven and the forgiveness of repentant sinners.



**THE**  
**CABARET OF THE BREAK OF DAY.**



THE  
CABARET OF THE BREAK OF DAY.

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CHAPTER I.

NO one who has ever visited Paris can have failed to remark the tower of St. Jacques de la Boucherie in the ancient Place du Châtelet. The tower and the Place are now sadly modernised, but the former is one of the finest specimens of the declining style of pointed architecture in France, and is the only remaining portion of the church of St. Jacques de la Bou-

cherie, which once occupied the entire area of the cloth-market at its base, and which was demolished during the Revolution.

Close by this old church—so close, indeed, as to lie beneath the very shadow of its tower in the evening sunset—there stood, about the middle of the last century, a mean *cabaret*, called Le Point du Jour (The Break of Day). It was a small, ill-lighted, dirty place, with sanded floors, and benches stained with liquors, and tables cut all over with the names of revellers. An old man, grey, withered, and cunning-eyed, served at the bar, and a young boy waited on the customers in the parlour.

Le Point du Jour was, however, a well-known cabaret and a prosperous. M. Perpignan's cellar was famous for old Macon wine, and his parlour for being the daily resort of a celebrated landscape-painter, named Simon Ma-

thurin Lantara, an artist whose genius trod closely upon the footsteps of Claude Lorraine. Like that great painter, he had taken Nature alone for his master and model; and like too many of those who are indebted for their success solely to the spontaneous promptings of native talent, he was indolent, careless, and self-indulgent.

Tainted by the sceptical philosophy of the Voltairean school; gifted with a fund of wit and repartee; endued with a natural taste for letters; an enthusiastic lover of beauty in all its phases; generous, thoughtless, affectionate, and kind-hearted, Lantara only needed to have lived a century later to have been happy, a prosperous, a respectable man. As it was, the age ruined him — the brilliant, licentious age of Louis XV. At the same time it must be confessed that M. Perpignan's old Macon wine bore some share in the errors of the landscape-

painter. That old Macon was his fate—his bad angel.

For its sake only, he frequented a low wine-shop such as this in the Place St. Jacques de la Boucherie; for its sake, he mingled constantly with the uneducated crowd of fourth-class actors, strolling musicians, ruined gamblers, and indifferent sign-painters, which daily filled the back-parlour of Le Point du Jour; for its sake, he sank lower and lower every year in poverty, intemperance, and degradation. Yet, despite the inferior natures by which he was surrounded; despite the atmosphere of low debauchery wherein he moved and breathed; despite the fumes of wine which obscured his better sense, and robbed his hand of its steadiness, Lantara was inspired with the true fire of genins. •

To him the flushing skies and dewy pastures were holy yet familiar things. Looking upon his canvas you seemed

to see the very freshness of the past shower—to feel the Summer wind blowing through the mountain pass, and shaking the leaves of the forest. Above all he delighted to represent the fleecy vapours of “incense-breathing morn,” and those rare sun-mists in which our English Turner has since proved so great. Some of his crayon-sketches yet preserved in the Musée des Dessins and in various private collections, are wonderfully bold and effective. The materials, too, are sufficiently simple; the whole thing consisting merely of careless touches in black and white crayons on grey or blue paper. Upon the latter he drew some moonlight views of a magical, dreamy loveliness altogether unique.

But the cabaret spoiled all his prosperity, and fatally interrupted his labours. The back-parlour of Le Point du Jour was Lantara’s *atelier*. There stood a table, called “Lantara’s table.”

It was stained all over with oil-paint, and heaped at one end with boxes of colour, palettes, brushes, mahl-sticks, and old frames. There he sat amid a throng of boon-companions and low admirers—there, inspired by draughts of the old Macon, he lavished the flashes of his wit upon unworthy ears—there he reproduced the unsullied bloom of earth and sky in his latest *chefs-d'œuvre*.

And to this wretched place all those who desired to purchase his paintings were obliged to come. It is easy to conceive how odious such a pilgrimage must have been to the rich and fastidious nobles of the court of Louis Quinze, and what wealth and honour Lantara must have necessarily lost in the back-parlour of Le Point du Jour. Here, however, some patrons condescended to seek him; and amongst others, His Grace the Duke de Richelieu.

Carried to the door in a sedan-chair

and attended by servants on foot in gorgeous liveries, the Duke made his way with an air of supreme disgust into the little noisome parlour at the back.

“Parbleu!” said he, with a shrug and a grimace, “you are a droll fellow, thus to establish your atelier at a wine-shop, in the quartier of St. Jacques de la Boucherie! Do you know, Lantara, one must love the arts to excess, before one can summon courage to wade through the sand and dirt of this parlour, for the sake of a picture.”

“Merit is modest,” replied the painter, with a merry glance; “and it is for the noble and enterprising to seek it in the shade. But what can I do to serve Monseigneur le Duc? Does he wish for the sacred or the profane? For silver moonlight, for purple sunset, for a rippling lake? Or would he prefer the vestal vapours of the morn? With twenty-four sous’ worth of paint, I can supply him.”

“I wish,” replied Richelieu, “for a landscape such as I will describe to you. It is to fill a particular place in my gallery. You must depict a little chapel and a humble manse, all overgrown with the creeping ivy. Let the country around be uncultivated—give a distant forest, a mountain-stream, some rocks: in short, I want something simple, yet savage; and enveloped, moreover, in one of your vaporous hazes. I say nothing to you about price—the Duke de Richelieu never bargains.”

The painter bowed low over the nobleman's extended hand, and his Grace went forth from the cabaret, leaving behind him a strong odour of musk.

Lantara applied himself vigorously to his task; but, like the immortal Claude, he could never paint the human form divine; and so the Duke's picture contained not a single figure. It was completed in the short space of one month, and it was a marvel of romantic scenery, of mist, of

finish. The Duke de Richelieu came back in about five weeks, and found Lantara stretched idly upon a bench in the back-parlour of the cabaret, drinking and smoking with two or three others.

"Is this the way to work?" asked the Duke, with that air of *bonhomie* in which he was wont to convey a reproach. "What has become of my picture?"

"*Finis coronat opus !*" said the painter. "Behold, it is finished! It is not my place, Monseigneur, to vaunt my own skill; but I think you must confess that it is a master-piece."

"It is very beautiful, Lantara," replied his Grace, inspecting the canvas through his eye-glass; "but there is one thing in which I am disappointed."

"Indeed! and what may that be?"

"I am amazed at the freshness of the colours, at the *vraisemblance* of the scene, at the purity of touch—but you have forgotten the figures. I see the forest,

the valley, the chapel, the manse—but not a human figure!”

“Monseigneur,” replied the artist, “*all the people are at mass.*”

“At mass, are they?” replied the duke. “Eh bien! I will pay for the picture when they come out.”

“If that be all, I will make them come out directly, Monseigneur.” And Lantara, snatching up a pencil, sketched a grotesque figure half hidden among the trees of the forest.

“There,” he said, when he had finished; “I have soon satisfied you.”

“But what you have done is nothing! it is a blemish, not an improvement. Monsieur, your jest is in bad taste, and very ill-timed.”

The Duke was really angry.

“But, Monseigneur,” urged Lantara, “when the mass was over, the good people hastened home. *They are all gone in.* The proof of what I say is, that this peasant, having lost his way in the forest,

is so ashamed of being seen that he is hiding himself from every eye. It would be scarcely decent or reverential to be strolling out at such a time."

It is almost unnecessary to add that Richelieu, quite disarmed by this reply, paid instantly for the picture, which was in truth a chef-d'œuvre.

The money was soon spent in the back-parlour of the Point du Jour; for Lantara, who like most artists was utterly improvident, would play the host to every comer, and was soon more deeply in debt than he had been before.

Shortly after this, a circumstance occurred which threatened for awhile to deprive M. Perpignan of his customer. Lantara rented a miserable garret at the top of an old house, behind the church of St. Jacques de la Boucherie—a wretched place with broken windows and an open chimney, and furnished with only a mattress, a chair, a lame table, and a caged lapwing; which last was the sole

charm and treasure of his comfortless home. One night the painter, who had been indulging more than usual in the old Macon, was so intoxicated that he could not find his lodging; so he staggered up the steps, and fell fast asleep under the porch of St. Jacques. Here he was awakened by the sunshine the next morning. He rose. The cabaret was just facing him; he crossed over, and went in. It was grey evening before he came out again; and this time, although he was sober compared with the night before, his brain was heated, and his step far from steady. He reached his own door—he ascended the staircase—he entered his garret. Alas! in the two days' revel he had forgotten his poor lap-wing. There it lay at the bottom of the cage, dead for want of food and water.

The bird had been his only tie, his only affection in the world! Lantara, in despair, would have thrown himself from the window, but was prevented by a

fellow-lodger, an old fiddler, who had been attracted by his cries of grief. Subdued by this man's persuasions, Lantara passed from his first stage of feverish excitement to a condition of listless melancholy. For three days and nights he hung over the body of his little favourite, smoothing its feathers with his hand, and calling it by the most endearing names. But it was quite cold and dead, and could return his love and respond to his call no longer.

"Alas!" sobbed the painter, "it is I who have murdered thee, my pretty bird! I have murdered thee, and there is no law to punish me, monster that I am! Thou art dead—thou canst not reproach me! But it is the wine-shop, the wine-shop that has been the cause of thy death; and I swear upon thy corpse, never again to set foot upon the threshold of *Le Point du Jour*!"

Lantara kept his word—for eight days. The oaths of a drunkard are as readily

forgotten as those of a lover; besides, the dead are soon forgotten. Lantara buried his bird in a field near Paris; and he was very soon to be found constantly, perhaps more constantly than before, in the parlour of Le Point du Jour. However, he could not endure to stay in his old lodging—he could not sleep in the room which had witnessed the death of his poor lapwing. So he removed to a small room in the Rue du Chantre, which was in every respect neater and more pleasant than the last.

The proprietor of this house was a clever, calculating man. He knew his lodger's weakness in favour of old wine and good dinners, and he resolved to profit thereby. Thus, for a fat capon, a salad, some tarts, and a bottle of the old Macon, from M. Perpignan, the landlord secured a collection of valuable sketches for which, at the death of the poor artist, he received a considerable sum.

But in the meantime Lantara was get-

ting more and more deeply into debt at the bar of the cabaret, and every inhabitant of the quartier St. Jacques de la Boucherie might read the amount of his liabilities scored up behind the door.

This public announcement grieved the painter beyond measure, for he had not lost the pride of a gentleman. He proposed to paint two pictures for M. Perpignan, in order to defray the debt. To this offer, the *marchand de vins* reluctantly consented. Night and Morning were the subjects chosen for illustration; and Lantara set earnestly to work. But such was the luckless painter's penchant for the old Macon, that, long before the pictures were half finished, the amount of his debt was more than trebled, and his score filled three large slates behind the bar.

Lantara was as well known in the quartier as the tower of the church whence its name was derived, and his

presence alone brought plenty of custom to Le Point du Jour. When he used the parlour for his atelier, the place came to be regarded by the inhabitants as a kind of free exhibition, and they used not only to crowd round him, watching every movement of the pencil, but would even assemble outside and peep in through the windows. These visitors frequently treated the artist to a friendly glass in return for the amusement his labours afforded them; and from this circumstance Lantara conceived a project for liquidating his score.

This was how he proceeded:—in the first place he purchased a large canvas whereon he sketched the ruins of an old château half-way up the side of a rugged steep, and in the background a valley all luminous with the phosphorescent vapours of morning. This picture attracted a large number of spectators, amongst whom were several generous enough to offer Lantara sundry glasses of his favourite wine.

But he had one reply for all.

"I have given up wine," said the painter; "for Monsieur Perpignan has just imported a supply of capital gin from Schiedam, which I infinitely prefer."

"Chacun à son goût," replied they, with evident surprise. "You shall have the gin, Monsieur Lantara, and we will drink the old Macon."

The Schiedam was, in fact, remarkably good, and that day the painter drank some dozens of *petits verres*. The next morning he rose very early, and arrived at the cabaret at an hour so unwonted that M. Perpignan could not forbear expressing his astonishment.

"What! up already, Monsieur Lantara?" exclaimed he. "Surely something has gone wrong. Has anything happened?"

"Nothing. But I wanted to speak to you before the customers assemble, for I have something particular to say."

"What may that be?"

"I owe you money, Monsieur Perpignan."

"Parbleu ! I know that well enough. Why, here are three slates filled with your scores ! Thirty pâtés—fourteen dozen of the old Macon—twenty-six capons—seventeen salads with . . . ."

"Do not trouble yourself to recount the contents of the three slates, Monsieur Perpignan," interrupted Lantara, somewhat angrily. "I want to be out of your debt, and I am about to propose an idea to you."

"I want money," grumbled the marchand ; "I don't want ideas."

"But the idea shall be worth money, and that is the same thing. Now listen attentively, and follow my instructions to the letter. I told all the people yesterday that I had ceased to care for anything but the gin of Schiedam. There was not a word of truth in what I said, *mon ami*. The old Macon still has, and ever will have, my preference. Send me a bottle

at once, that I may prove it to you; and put it down to my score."

The wine was brought. He drank a tumblerful at a draught, and then went on:—

"And could you for one instant believe that I really preferred the pale Dutch liquid to the red old Burgundy? Alas! no—I only said so; but I said it with a purpose. *Attendez!* When the customers offer me a glass of gin, Monsieur Perpignan, serve up a glass of pure water, and thus you can set the price against my debt and wipe away that horrible list which fills me with shame and anger all day long. Farewell, my old favourite!" he cried with a deep sigh, as he poured the last drop into his glass. "Henceforth, I must taste nothing but water—and in truth, I am justly punished!"

That day the painter drank no less than twenty-five *petits verres* of cold water in expiation of his sins, and went

home at night in a state of unusual sobriety, singing with a melancholy voice this *refrain* of a popular drinking-song:—

“ Tous les méchants sont buveurs d’eau—  
C’est bien prouvé par le déluge ! ”

For several months Lantara heroically persevered in this course, and the slates in time wounded his pride no more. But the immoderate use of cold water, to which his pride or probity had urged him, produced a fatal effect upon his constitution, and before half a year had elapsed he became so ill that it was found necessary to remove him to the neighbouring hospital of La Charité, in the Rue Jacob. Here, although his case received the utmost attention, he grew rapidly worse, and it was soon evident that he was past recovery. For some days the vital spark flickered dimly, and during that brief interval his heart was opened to humility and penitence. On the 22nd of December, 1778, Simon Mathurin

Lantara closed a long career of artistic merit and moral weakness, unattended by one familiar face—uncared for by wife, child, or friend—a lonely man, without home or human tie, breathing his last sigh within the precincts of a public hospital.

The greater part of this artist's works were lost in the succeeding Revolution, and those paintings and sketches which bear his name command a high price in Parisian auction-rooms. Lantara is not so well known in this country as his genius entitles him to be. He was a really great and original painter, and his works deserve a place in our national collection beside those of Turner and Claude Lorraine.

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